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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A Monthly Journal of the Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

"As peak after peak of this Father of Mountains began to appear before my sight...the mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas always teach us...which is reverberating in the very atmosphere of the place — renunciation!"

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Cover: Sunset over the Garhwal range, Himalayas, with Swami Vivekananda's quotation in the foreground

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Vol. 111

JANUARY 2006

No. 1

❧ Traditional Wisdom ❧

CITIZENS OF RAMA'S TIME

तस्मिन्पुरवरे हृष्टा धर्मात्मानो बहुश्रुताः । नरास्तुष्टा धनैस्वैस्वैरलुब्धास्सत्यवादिनः ॥

The people in that great city were happy, virtuous, and learned; each was satisfied with their means, without avarice and of truthful speech.

कामी वा न कदर्यो वा नृशंसः पुरुषः कश्चित् । द्रष्टुं शक्यमयोध्यायां नाविद्वान्न च नास्तिकः ॥

None was seen in Ayodhya who was debauched, miserly or cruel; or who was uneducated or atheist.

सर्वे नराश्च नार्यश्च धर्मशीलास्सुसंयताः । उदिताशीलवृत्ताभ्यां महर्षय इवामलाः ॥

Men and women were of righteous conduct and fully self-controlled; elevated in their pure and chaste behaviour, they equalled the great sages.

न नास्तिको नानृतको न कश्चिदबहुश्रुतः । नासूयको न चाशक्तो नाविद्वान्विद्यते तदा ॥

None denied the Vedas, none uttered falsehood, none was unlearned; none was there who was envious, weak or unwise.

नाषडङ्गविद्वान्नासीन्नान्रतो नासहस्रदः । न दीनः क्षिप्तचित्तो वा व्यथितो वाऽपि कश्चन ॥

None was unversed in the six Vedangas, none who neglected their vows or was not munificent; none miserable, disturbed or anguished.

वर्णेष्वग्र्यचतुर्थेषु देवतातिथिपूजकाः । कृतज्ञाश्च वदान्याश्च शूरा विक्रमसंयुताः ॥

Everyone, in all the four varnas, worshipped the gods and the guest; all were grateful and generous, brave and heroic.

दीर्घायुषो नरास्सर्वे धर्म सत्यं च संश्रिताः ।

All attained a ripe age as virtuous and truth-loving people.

—Ramayana, 1.6



To Our Readers



It was a hundred and eleven years ago that *Prabuddha Bharata* was started as part of Swami Vivekananda's comprehensive plan to rejuvenate the spiritual as well as socio-cultural life of India and his programme of exchange between India and other nations.

As an official organ of the Ramakrishna Order, this journal has consistently attempted to call attention to the universal Vedantic principles of potential human divinity and unity of life, and stressed the spirit of harmony, egalitarianism, and synthesis in all walks of life. We have been focusing on spiritual perspectives, human values, cultural motifs and issues of social interest, highlighting the Ramakrishna Order's contributions to the making of a resurgent India and a harmonious global order.

We begin the new year with a study on

'Enlightened Citizenship', a theme that has been consistently stressed upon by our Order in various forms and contexts. A panel of committed citizens—seniors who have made significant contributions to our society as well as dynamic young men and women who represent the face of new India—provide us rich food for thought and action.

Swami Vivekananda wanted noble ideas to be made universally available for all to mould their personal lives and society accordingly. You—our readers, contributors, reviewers, advertisers and well-wishers—have been playing a very important role in helping us fulfil Swamiji's charge. We convey our greetings and good wishes to all of you, and look forward to your continued help in the wider dissemination of the ideas that this journal stands for.



This Month



In introducing this special number, the editorial, *Enlightened Citizenship*, calls for networking goodness as a bulwark against the social effects of the crisis of character.

Genuine human values can flower only when one is aware of the the higher spiritual dimension of one's being—the basis of human divinity and unity. In *The Need for Spiritually Enlightened Citizens* Swami Jagadatmanandaji, Secretary, Ramakrishna Saradashrama, Ponnampet, underscores this fact.

A Call for a Vedantic State is a persuasive appeal to incorporate an ethical element in India's constitution. The author, Sri Jagmohan, is a former Union Minister and Governor, Jammu and Kashmir.

Janab Muhammad Shaik Ghouse, former Principal, Gandhi Memorial School, Hyderabad, examines some elements of Islam and Hinduism to highlight the concept of *Enlightened Religion*.

In his article *The Scientific Temper: Indispensable to Enlightened Citizenship*, noted astrophysicist Dr Jayant V Narlikar calls for greater science-society communication through science journalism and promotion of basic science research in order to combat superstitious beliefs and behaviour. The author is Emeritus Professor, Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune.

Dr Indira Ramarao, Professor of Sociology, University of Mysore, points to the need for women to be aware of and gain access to

their civil, political and social rights in order to make citizenship meaningful in Enlightened Citizenship: A Feminist Perspective.

Enlightened Citizenship: A Woman's View is Smt. Barsha Nag Bhowmick's viewpoint on our theme. She is Chief Copy Editor, *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi.

Enlightened Women in Rural India is an inspiring tableau on women's empowerment from Smt. Shruba Mukhopadhyay, a senior journalist.

Dr K Kulandaivel, Chancellor, Avinashilingam Deemed University, Coimbatore, surveys our educational ideals and the state of our present education, and outlines what constitutes Education for Enlightenment.

Enlightened Administration is an insightful analysis of the weaknesses and strengths of our democracy. According to Sri R K Trivedi, former Chief Election Commissioner of India and Governor of Gujarat, our administration needs a spiritual focus and human sympathy to achieve the goal of a true welfare state.

Sri L N Jhunjhunwala, Chairman Emeritus, LNJ Bhilwara Group, has drawn upon the vision of Swami Vivekananda, the examples of some eminent Indian industrialists, and his personal experience to highlight what it takes to make Enlightened Entrepreneurs.

Towards Enlightened Health Care is a survey of the present state of health services in India and the direction that they need to follow to achieve the Health for All goals. The author, Dr H Sudarshan, is Vigilance Director, Government of Karnataka.

In The Military in Contemporary India: A Commentary, General Shankar Roychowdhury, former Chief of Staff, Indian Army, reviews the history of the Indian mili-

tary, its unique organization and ethos, and the role of the soldier as an enlightened citizen.

Enlightened Policing is a candid appraisal of policing in India from Sri Arvind Inamdar, former Director General, Maharashtra Police.

Justice N Venkatachala, the Lokayukta of Karnataka, draws our attention to the need for effective legislation to combat Corruption in Public Services.

Sri Tarun Goswami, Special Representative, *The Statesman*, Kolkata, has analysed the role of the media in shaping our social consciousness and suggested the path to Enlightened Journalism.

The European Union: Redefining Citizenship is a scholarly study of the evolution and functioning of the European Union and how it impinges on the concepts of nationality and citizenship. The author, Smt. Kamolika Peres, is a Supply Chain Management Leader with IBM's Business Consulting Services, Bangkok.

The Making of an Enlightened Citizen is an enquiry in citizenship training for the youth. Sri Probal Ray Choudhury, the author, is a postgraduate student in the Department of English, University of Madras.

Swami Chetanandaji, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of St Louis, concludes his study of the records of Sri Ramakrishna's utterances with *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* according to Swami Brahmananda.

Dhan Gopal Mukerji and *The Face of Silence* is a study of the life and works of one who played a key role in introducing the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna to the world. The author, Swami Tathagatanandaji, is Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society, New York.

Enlightened Citizenship

EDITORIAL

Inaugurating a symposium on enlightened citizenship at Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, in 1980, Swami Ranganathananda pointed out:

Enlightenment is a great word; it connotes seeing things and oneself in a new light. We speak of Buddha attaining enlightenment, *bodhi*; that light that was lit by one man in himself in the sixth century BC eventually lit up the whole of Asia; and the heart of that enlightenment was compassion, *karuna*. ... All enlightenment is an awakening, a *prabodha*, to man's larger Self behind his genetically-conditioned smaller self. *Uttishthata, Jagrata—Arise, Awake!* is, therefore, the clarion call of the Upanishads and Buddha to all humanity. Vivekananda, accordingly, invoked *Prabuddha Bharata*, Awakened India, into existence, and put his temporarily sleeping ancient land and people on the path of all-round national awakening.

Swami Vivekananda's Call to the Nation

Speaking at Ramnad, soon after his return from the West, Swami Vivekananda envisioned this awakening in the following words: 'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sordest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking ... India, this motherland of ours ... from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.' A fortnight later, in his famous lecture on 'The Future of India' at Madras, Swamiji gave his legendary mandate to his countrymen:

For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India. ... This is the only god that is awake, our own race—'everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything.' All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go af-

ter and yet cannot worship the god that we see all round us, the Virat? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other gods. ... The first of all worship is the worship of the Virat—of those all around us. Worship It. Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do. These are all our gods—men and animals; and the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other.'

This fifty-years' mandate, given exactly fifty years prior to India's independence, was taken seriously by the men and women who worked for the country's freedom. Both the radical and moderate elements in Indian politics—from Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Subhas Bose to Gokhale and Mahatma Gandhi—recognized the need for social and economic rejuvenation of India as an essential component of genuine liberty and tried to work for it. The masses at the grass roots were also inspired to organize themselves, develop a social commitment and work for social uplift in a disciplined fashion. This was exemplified by newly formed groups like the Anushilan Samiti, the Dawn Society, and the numerous Vivekananda societies, as well as in the increasing social commitment of established groups like the Arya Samaj. Both Gandhiji, in leading the non-cooperation movement, and Subhas Bose, in initiating national planning and in raising up the Indian National Army, were bringing the power of character and of the spirit to bear upon the cause of their country. This awakening culminated not only in India's political freedom, but also set in motion the global dismantlement of imperialism.

But Swami Vivekananda's concerns were more fundamental than the mere attainment of political independence, his outlook was more

global than what is commonly understood by the term *Indian*, and the stretch of his vision extended well beyond the fifty years he mentioned in his Ramnad address. He called for total human development, for social health and progress are dependent on men and women of character. His synthetic spirit wanted Indians to become 'occidental of occidentals' in their 'spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy', and at the same time remain 'Hindu to the very backbone in their religious culture and instincts'. In the religious sphere he saw the 'junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam', as the only hope for his motherland.

He said to his countrymen: 'It is absolutely necessary for you ... to learn from the Englishman the idea of prompt obedience to leaders, the absence of jealousy, the indomitable perseverance, and the undying faith in himself. ... Until this absence of jealousy and obedience to leaders are learnt by the Hindu, there will be no power of organization.' And he was categorical that 'to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills'. 'If we are to live we must be a scientific nation', he added.

Enlightened Citizenship and the Crisis of Character

In putting together this number we have attempted to contextualize Swami Vivekananda's exhortations to his countrymen a hundred years after they issued forth from his lips and pen. If Swamiji were to assess our progress over these one hundred years, he would have little hesitation in saying that we have not fared badly, given the many changes for the better that have taken place on the socio-economic front. Eradication of famines, doubling of life expectancy, abolition of untouchability, the manifold increase in economic productivity and the significant dissemination of education are some of the obvious positives.

But a crisis of character is very much with us. This comes through in several of the essays in this issue. The most alarming manifestation

of this virus is corruption in public offices. Sri Jagmohan and Justice Venkatachala suggest legislation as a core element in fighting corruption. Swami Vivekananda had pointed out the need for a new smriti to match the times. It has rightly been suggested that the Indian constitution fulfils this very need. In securing for the citizens social, economic and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, and equality of status and opportunity, and in promoting fraternity and assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation, it provides Indians with the most progressive of human rights.

Article 51A of the constitution lays down the fundamental duties of Indian citizens. As most of us are unlikely to remember this even if we have read it in our school texts on civics, it deserves to be cited in detail:

- a) to abide by the constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- e) to promote harmony and spirit of brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic, and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures;
- h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.
- k) to provide opportunities for education to each child between six and fourteen years.

This document clearly states what the nation expects of its citizens. Sri Jagmohan has argued that although we have declared ourselves a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, our constitution makes no overt reference to ethics in public life. When lack of human integrity is clearly the most vital element undermining all development activity in India, this ethical dimension of citizenship needs to be clearly stated in the constitution.

Legislation alone cannot ensure the rule of law though it certainly sets the tone for concrete action. We have executive agencies to enforce the law, but Justice Venkatachala argues for a more proactive approach and greater political will to combat corruption.

In the ultimate analysis, however, any significant social change must involve a transformation of mass consciousness. It has been pointed out by Sri T N Chaturvedi that 'enlightened citizens as individuals and enlightened citizens as groups, both have to work to overcome social stagnation, economic unrest, political cynicism, or administrative frustration. In other words, enlightened citizenship has to challenge the kind of things which create a situation in which a citizen feels himself hopeless and helpless in society.'

Average citizens usually find themselves too insignificant and powerless to alter the course of society. They are more victims of society than its makers. Corruption flourishes because the average individual reconciles oneself to it rather than resort to a harsher path. Paying 'speed money' for a good job appears to make more sense than somehow eking out a living. Many argue that they resort to corrupt practices because, well, 'everybody is doing the same thing, and you could not possibly survive otherwise'. The fact that corrupt individuals often appear to make a good living adds to the cynicism. This is especially true of Indian politics with its increasing criminalization. With law-breakers playing lawmakers, confidence in the rule of law gets seriously undermined.

Networking Goodness

Swami Vivekananda had pointed out that three things are necessary to make every person great, every nation great:

1. Conviction in the powers of goodness.
2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion.
3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as our chronicled history, bear testimony to the maxim *yato dharmah tato jayah*, the righteous cause must end victorious. A Duryodhana or a Hitler can wreak unimaginable havoc, clinch many a battle, but cannot win the war. Dharma, whether exemplified by the heroic Pandavas or by the nameless millions who died resisting Hitler's forces, must win in the end, for dharma is synonymous with order. If society is to survive, it must have order; chaos is the very antithesis of organization.

If goodness must needs succeed, why is evil so rampant in society? Evidently, success is not without a price, nor is it instantaneous. It does require some insight to be convinced of the powers of goodness, and greater courage to stand up for a righteous cause. The cheat trusts his instincts to get away with deceit. To be settled in the conviction that honesty and integrity are bound to have their long-term rewards calls for practice.

We need to practise developing trust in the good and join hands with the good if we are to feel the strength inherent in goodness. A terrorist attack may appear fearfully powerful and get noticed globally, but the innumerable silent acts of vigilance that go to thwart such attacks every day are bound to remain unnoticed.

Enlightened citizenship is about enlightened self-interest; about awareness of our social responsibilities and the dedication and discipline to carry these out. A hundred 'strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone', Swami Vivekananda pointed out, can revolutionize the world. We may do well to develop this belief.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago

January 1906

The National Idea

The dominating fact in human destiny is place. ... Mystic, sacramental, all-compelling is the bond that knits together man and soil.

This influence of place on humanity works itself out in two directions at the same time—those of labour and of thought. That daily life and toil are the products purely of the region in which a people dwell is not indeed difficult to see. ... These are facts that no one could dispute. But it is less easy to see, and yet equally true, that the moral and intellectual life of a community is also the outcome of the report which his senses make to man regarding all that lies within that circular horizon of which he himself is the centre. ...

Such facts as these make of every country geographically distinct, the cradle of a nation. Neither race, language, nor religion can divide essentially those who are made one by the supreme organic condition of Place. Even the human element, of family and society, comes second only in the list of evolutionary influences. But all these, we remember, are, like ourselves, or like the whole of the community to which we belong, themselves the product of the birthland. Their spiritual influence upon us is the result of her spiritual influence upon them, even as the food that they gave us in our babyhood is the result of the toil that she made possible to them.

It is the nation, rather than the individual, that derives from the land its characteristics. ... It is with the products of the national energy, products of field and canal, of road and town, that she is garbed. To her calm wisdom, to her serene maturity, the quarrels of sects and parties do not exist.

This law is fundamental and imperative, that the enrichment of the land itself be the whole object of the wealth that is drawn from it, and for him who disobeys there waits the doom of the outraged soil.

The geographical area is thus the first and incomparably the most important condition of national unity, and a common economic experience makes that unity complete. When a common hunger is fed by common harvests; when common death is meted out by common famines; when a single burst of thanksgiving hails the advent of each season in its sequence; when a single wail is heard in the terror of rains withheld; when need is one, and hope is one, when fear is one, and love is one, how are men to dream long that there are barriers dividing them? ...

Nations like individuals, find self-expression. The characteristic arts and architecture of a people are at bottom the direct outcome of their worship of place. The work-life and the thought-life have united to form the priceless *mela* of great cities, and these in their turn reveal to the world the national ideal of beauty, the national taste. Again, the community that will be fed must lay out its pastures, preserve its forests, and carry out works of irrigation and tillage; and every clod of earth that is turned up, every branch that is pruned, utters the peasant's love and hope. Thus man inherits the earth and re-makes it. The map of a country ought to suggest to us the untiring energy of that great corporate individuality by which it has been brought into being. The work of communities lies in technical processes. By coalescence of industrial communities, we obtain improvements and new applications of processes. Thus, in sum, we arrive at geo-technics, the science of earth-making. Half, mother of the folk she sustains and feeds: half, offspring herself of the racial energy—the Home-land! the Home-land! the mystic comrade of man!

—Indian World

The Need for Spiritually Enlightened Citizens

SWAMI JAGADATMANANDA

A simple story is told of a boy whose wit and common sense produced a good example for driving home a moral. One evening his father returned from his office and to his utter amazement found that the world map, which he often referred to, was torn to pieces. He cried out the name of his eldest son and admonished him for unruly behaviour. The boy replied, 'Father, I have just returned from my tuition. I don't know how it happened.' 'Oh, then it must be your little brother's prank', said the father. 'All right, I will give you one hour to set it right. That should be a test of your geography.' However, even before an hour the boy returned with the map. The father was amazed as he gave it a thorough look. To his surprise everything was in its place, the seven seas, the continents, the lakes and islands! He praised his son's knowledge. The boy said, 'But, Father, it is not really scholarship. In fact I am not so good at geography. I had seen a figure of a human being on the reverse of the map and I just set the pieces based on that figure, which was quite easy. Then I patched the pieces together and presented it to you right side up.'

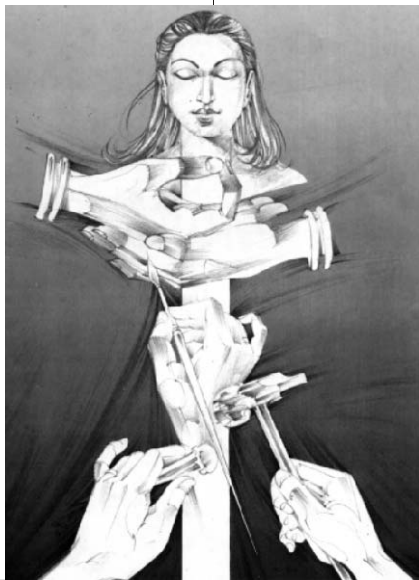
The moral of the story is clear: setting human beings right automatically sets the world right. But what are human beings? What is their real nature? What is wrong with them now because of which the world seems to be fragmented in every area of life—race, religion, economics, politics. And

what should be the basis of the unity that needs to be brought about?

When Swami Vivekananda returned from his first visit to the West he was asked if he could help his countrymen regain their political freedom. Swamiji said he could get it for them in two days, but where were the men who could keep it? What kind of men did Swamiji mean? He answered the question in his lecture on 'My Plan of Campaign' in Madras: 'Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionised.' What Swamiji meant was men of pure character, strengthened with spirituality, selfless, and greatly concerned about suffering humanity. As has been rightly remarked by the eminent historian Will Durant, 'real revolution is the enlightenment of mind and improvement of character ... the only the real revolutionists are philosophers and saints'. Here he echoes Swamiji's idea

of deluging the land with spiritual ideas before flooding it with social and political ideas. And this can only be accomplished by really spiritual people who are ready to sacrifice themselves for the welfare of the world.

What is the condition of man in this modern age? With his distorted self-image he is creating trouble for himself and for the people around him. He needs a philosophy to live by that is based on universal reality. Merely



the study of the external world with the help of science, however profound, will never lead him to the discovery of his real nature. And unless he has a clear insight into his true nature and his potentialities, it will be impossible for him to have a philosophy that will guide him in the process of all-round development.

In the days before independence, enlightened and educated men occupying eminent positions in society were filled with high patriotism. The ideals of service and sacrifice, which they had accepted as a way of life, were soon forgotten by the politicians and leaders who came after them. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari predicted what the situation would be if those high ideals were given up: 'As soon as we attain independence, we will have elections and what they produce—corruption, the arrogance of officials, the inefficiency of administration. All will remember the rule which they had witnessed earlier—just, efficient, honest and peaceful. The only consolation is that we have been free from indignity and slavery. We can hope for a better life only through a liberal universal education. Only through such an education citizens can imbibe, right from childhood, values like good conduct, faith in God, love and peace. In its absence there will be widespread injustice and squandering of money. How happy the world can be if people find happiness in loving one another, develop faith in God and live with a spirit of justice! India has a greater strength to practise such principles than other countries.'

Materialism and the Problems of Modern Man

Ever since James Watt ushered in the Industrial Revolution with his invention of the steam engine in 1790, science has advanced so much that it has changed the culture and civilization of the whole world. Politics, economics, and even religion, have all been immensely influenced by science.

Prof. Maurice Wilkins, who won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1962, admitted in an interview that 'about half the world's scientists

and engineers are engaged in war programmes'. Physicist Fritjof Capra writes: 'We have piled up tens of thousands of nuclear weapons; enough to destroy the entire world several times.' 'Materialism and all its miseries can never be conquered by materialism', said Swamiji. More than a hundred years ago he observed: 'Spirituality must conquer the West. ... The whole of the Western world is on a volcano which may burst tomorrow, go to pieces tomorrow. They have searched every corner of the world and have found no respite. They have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure and found it vanity.'

Man with a materialistic outlook naturally develops an inordinate craving for wealth, power, status and popularity, and the accompanying permissiveness ultimately degrades him. The excessive competition that was encouraged earlier to make for faster progress and greater economic domination over the other part of the globe, has resulted in nearly fifty per cent of the people of the West becoming victims of mental disease and drug abuse. Modern civilization does not seem to suit mankind! It is not based on the knowledge of man's real nature, nor does it function with the objective of achieving his all-round development. So what is the use of scientific advancement when we do not try to know beforehand where it is going to take us? What we choose from the unlimited treasure of science is often not concerned with the progress of mankind. In fact, by providing us with more leisure than we know how to make good use of, scientific civilization has done us great harm. 'Mental weakness, psychosis, lunacy are perhaps the price we have to pay for our technological revolution', said Alexis Carrel.

In the late nineteenth century Swami Vivekananda pointed out that 'it is spiritual culture and ethical culture alone that can change wrong racial tendencies for the better'. Unless our basic attitudes towards life and reality are changed, true happiness and lasting fulfilment will ever elude us in spite of the proliferation of objects of enjoyment and means of

seeking pleasure. Why? Because pleasure is caused by excitement of the senses and is short-lived, whereas real happiness is independent of sense contact and long-lasting. It wells up from within, from the depths of the heart. Pleasure is based on selfish or ego-centric drives, whereas happiness comes from transcending the little self and working for other people's welfare. Sense pleasure produces painful reactions, whereas true happiness gives us calmness and peace.

The majority of educated people in our country have embraced the 'scientific', materialistic, self-aggrandizing outlook. It is one of the chief objectives of science to provide comfort and convenience to mankind, but then too much of a good thing can also be harmful! The hold that these comforts and conveniences have on man is ever tightening. To be sure, we are all proud of the advancements of our scientific civilization, but unfortunately, the achievements of science have also increased the number of people who behave worse than beasts. Millions die in wars. Moral values are sacrificed in the name of individual freedom. And the media and technological innovations like the Internet often end up doing the greatest damage to moral values. So there is no guarantee that man's inward progress will keep pace with his external advancement.

In order to understand that principle of interior progress, we have to grasp the nature and structure of the mind at its deeper levels. We should get acquainted with the precious gems hidden in the ocean of our mind. We must comprehend the universal principles that underlie the progress and welfare of human life. We need to abide by certain values that endow us with the power of guiding ourselves. And until we find sound answers to some fundamental questions—What is the purpose of human life? What are its objectives? Is there anything more to our lives than just eating, drinking, sleeping and begetting children?—our lives will remain empty. As Alexis Carrel says, 'No advantage is to be gained by increasing the number of me-

chanical inventions. It would perhaps be as well not to accord so much importance to discoveries of physics, astronomy, and chemistry.' In truth, pure science never directly brings us any harm. But when its fascinating beauty dominates our mind and enslaves our thoughts in the realm of inanimate matter, it becomes dangerous. Man must turn his attention to himself, and to the cause of his mental and moral disability. What is the good of increasing the complexities of our civilization if our weaknesses prevent us from using them to our best advantage?

The Spiritual Solution of Our Present Problems

In different places at different times thinking men have wrestled with the question of man's real nature. But it was here in India that they arrived at the correct answer. Man is not, as the materialists think, a combination of material substances or 'animated flesh'; he is the deathless Spirit. The welfare of the world depends on the recognition of this fact, for it is in the light of its knowledge that we formulate our concepts of right or wrong. These concepts and beliefs determine our character, and our character makes the world what it is.

'By what is a man impelled to commit sin, as if by force, even against his will?' This baffling question is examined in the Bhagavadgita. In answer, the scripture says it is desire, which stems from man's identification with his psychophysical self, that causes him to forget his spiritual Self and thus fall into sin. Our spiritual Self is the basis of all morality and ethics; our character is determined entirely by our knowledge of it. And it is our character that has the greatest influence on the world.

'Millions of men today search for an ideal to reintegrate their personalities,' says Alvin Toffler. Spiritual idealism seems to be the only hope for bringing about the required change. Man's development remains incomplete unless he becomes introspective and tries to understand the true nature of his soul. Science makes a special study of the outer world; in the pro-

cess, it also gathers much knowledge about man. When its deductions are properly interpreted, they do prove the existence of eternal verities, for, as David Bohm says, 'Consciousness and matter are just different aspects of the same fundamental something [God]'.

However, spiritual experience is beyond the purview of science. It is attained by quite a different means, such as selfless service, purity of mind, worship of God, prayer and meditation, and observance of ethical and moral principles. In ancient times our sages and seers did considerable research on the subject. Going beyond the limits of the conscious and unconscious mind they discovered the perfect means of attaining spiritual freedom.

The history of the world is witness to the fact that when the balance between spirituality and worldliness is upset, the peace and happiness of human life are undermined. Swamiji warned us: 'Religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when that goes India will die, in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in spite of Kubera's wealth poured upon the head of every one of her children. ... There is no regeneration for India until you be spiritual. ... The mightiest buildings, if built upon the loose sand foundations of materialism, must come to grief one day, must totter to their destruction some day.' So Swamiji wanted that the saving truths confined in our scriptures be brought out and scattered broadcast. Educated people should absorb spiritual ideas and spread the message of religion. That would create a spiritual awareness among the people and infuse them with virtues like selflessness.

Man-making and Character-building

In the present education scenario neither teachers nor parents appear to be giving enough attention to what kinds of thoughts and feelings children entertain in their minds, what kinds of habits they cultivate. There is not much in the education system to equip our students for the battle of life. It can safely be said that they are hardly interested in worthwhile books, books

that contain inspiring life stories of great men and women, their thoughts and ideas, and their message. So we need to incorporate such elements as are needed for the formation of a strong character. Educationists, teachers and parents are the guardians of our culture and so have a crucial role to play in moulding the thoughts and character of the younger generation.

Every feeling, thought or action of ours can be compared to a wave moving across the surface of the lake of our mind, appearing for a while and then disappearing. We may forget what we felt, thought or did, but unknown to us, each one of them produces an indelible impression in the mind that is stored in its deeper layers. These impressions are called *samskaras* in Sanskrit. Countless such *samskaras* dictate our character and conduct. 'We are what our thoughts have made us,' says Swamiji, 'so take care of what you think.'

'Habit is the second nature of man.' It is the mother of character. If we think deeply, we realize that habit is at the very base of human nature. Character is nothing but fashioned will, according to John Stuart Mill. And the will is nothing but the sum total of thoughts inspiring action. When thoughts and actions are definite, regular and constructive, they indicate steady character. Therefore, since character is nothing but fashioned will, it is a great mistake to dub any man 'characterless'. For one thing, he represents a character, he is a bundle of habits. For another, habits, however bad, can be conquered and replaced with better habits. What we call conduct is nothing but repeated habit. So conduct can be reformed by means of repeated actions geared to the intended reformation.

But prevention is always better than cure. Habits, though initially like the flimsy threads of a spider's web, gather strength with the passage of time and become strong as fetters of steel to hold us in their grip. In order to avoid falling into bad habits one must assiduously cultivate good ones. It is said that our basic personal habits are formed well before the age of twenty

years, and by the time we are thirty our intellectual habits are set. Still we can outgrow negative habits if we determinedly subject ourselves to a long course of self-discipline and self-restraint and emerge pure and strong in the end.

Two definitions of the word *dharma* come to mind: *Yato bhyudaya niḥśreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharmah*; and *dhāraṇāddharma ityāhurddharma dhārayati prajāḥ*. According to Hindu scriptures, the twin ideals of *abhyudaya* (material prosperity) and *niḥśreyasa* (spiritual emancipation) are complementary. In fact, real *abhyudaya* is possible and meaningful only when it is oriented to *niḥśreyasa*. That is why in ancient India the chief purpose of education was to acquire and impart knowledge for one's own welfare and for the welfare of other people. It is only then that knowledge becomes fruitful. For the attainment of this purpose five basic principles (*pancha-shila*) have to be adhered to:

1. *Jijnasa*, or the desire to know. The desire to exist, the desire to know and the desire to enjoy are the three basic desires of a human being. Of these, it is the desire to know that governs the other two. Therefore its proper cultivation occupies a primary place in education. By *jijnasa* is meant not mere curiosity but (a) love of knowledge for its own sake, and (b) the longing to know the ultimate Truth.

2. *Shraddha*, or faith. Faith is more than just belief. It is 'trust' (a) in one's higher self (Atman) and in one's own potentialities, (b) in God, and (c) in dharma, or the moral order that governs the universe (which involves a conviction that virtue will ultimately triumph).

3. *Shakti*, or strength. Strength does not mean the strength of a brute to fight and destroy. It includes (a) physical strength to discharge one's duties properly, (b) mental strength to bear the unavoidable adversities of life, (c) strength of will in the exercise of self-control (*samyama*), especially with regard to enjoyment, and (d) the capacity for one-pointed application or perseverance in any form of work undertaken (including higher meditation).

4. *Niti*, or morality. This consists of (a)

personal moral principles such as truthfulness, chastity and non-violence, (b) social moral principles such as respect for elders and women, dignity of labour and non-exploitation of others, and (c) collective moral principles such as patriotism, international understanding and religious harmony.

5. *Seva*, or service. Service rather than being restricted to some special kinds of activities, should become a 'way of life', that is, it should be a basic attitude towards social life. Such service has four main components: (a) service to one's parents, (b) service to holy people and one's teachers, (c) service to the poor and the sick, and (d) service to humanity at large through the work one does.

In addition to the above principles, we should also have a well-defined method in order to improve ourselves morally and ethically. Evaluating ourselves against the values listed above, along with the practice of self-introspection, will help us in that. This kind of self-introspection acts as a mirror and shows us where we stand. Our whole life must become a course in self-discipline. Perfection is not a fixed value; there is no end to it. As long as we live, we must keep learning and improving. There are no short cuts here. So we need not be too ambitious in the beginning. Before attempting to run, we must learn to walk easily.

Need to Know Oneself

Millions of thinking men all over the world today are searching for a spiritual ideal round which to reintegrate their personalities. The future of the world depends on the human race's understanding of the true nature of man and his potentialities. There have been many in our country who with a thorough understanding of the true nature of the 'ego' succeeded in transcending it and lived in higher spiritual consciousness. The essential unity of the universe is the main discovery of the Eastern spiritual masters. That is the chief discovery of the modern physicists too. 'The quantum theory forces us to see the universe not as a collection of

physical objects, but rather as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole,' says Fritjof Capra. This unity is expressed both at the microcosmic level and at the macrocosmic level.

Be that as it may, 'the aim of civilization is progress, not of science and machinery, but of mankind', as Alexis Carrel said. Einstein voiced the same opinion in other words: 'Objective knowledge provides us with powerful instruments for the achievement of certain ends in life. But the ultimate goal of life and the longing to reach it must come from another source.' Modern philosophers are only echoing what the Greek thinkers and the seers of the Upanishads declared thousands of years ago about the aim of human life—'Know thyself!' But how is this to be done? 'Give me a place to stand and I will move the Earth', said Archimedes. What he meant was, if he had a firm place to stand, a lever and a fulcrum, he could lift the earth off the orbit. Just so, we cannot hope to solve the problems relating to the ever-changing ego even while we are standing on it! We need to recognize our spiritual self and take our stand on it in order to solve our problems. 'Men do not know themselves and therefore do not understand the things of the inner world. Each man has the essence of God and all the wisdom and power of the world (germinally) in himself. He possess one kind of knowledge as much as another and ... [if he] does not find that which is in him, [he] cannot truly say that he does not possess it but only that he was not capable of successfully seeking it', observed Paracelsus.

One thing is certain, that to decide the meaning of life and existence and to understand the significance and objective of human life, it is not enough to know the external universe. It can only be understood by getting to know closely what exists in the depths of the human mind, by understanding the way in which it functions, by grasping the law of its operation and by perceiving its ultimate nature.

The wonderful developments of science

during the past three hundred years mainly concern the external world. The study of the nature and potentialities of the human mind is of more recent origin; it has a history of about a hundred years. It is true that with the help of their fine instruments the scientists have understood innumerable minute details of the exterior world. But many of them are realizing, though belatedly, that the nature of the mind, its innate tendency to constantly flow outward, prevents man from getting an insight into the deeper, hidden aspects of the cosmos. That, however, can be achieved only by the practice of meditation.

Science has raised man's power of investigation to an all-time high. Man now seems to be at the peak of his intellectual abilities. Is it not within his power to create a beautiful world full of honesty, justice, brotherhood, understanding, cooperation, peace and tolerance? Why has he not succeeded in that? Man can now make the five elements dance to his tune; he is comfortable alike on land, in water or in space; he can now wipe out terrible epidemics that used to threaten the human race. Can he not fill his heart with a sense of brotherhood and friendship? Can he not quench the fire of hatred with the ambrosia of love?

Even religious leaders are nowadays concerned only with strengthening their own organizations, instead of bringing about a spiritual renaissance. True religion performs two functions. First, it trains the restless mind and directs its energies towards a noble ideal. Second, it teaches the mind to live with other people harmoniously. Man is not just a combination of material substances. He is the Self, the Atman. This faith that we are Atman will make us masters of ourselves. Control over the body and the senses results in purification of the heart, and that leads to Self-realization. It destroys all sorrows, bestows on one eternal bliss and brings real fulfilment. It is in working towards this end that we can bring genuine harmony within ourselves and in society. ~

A Call for a Vedantic State

JAGMOHAN

A National Omission

I have seen public administration from different positions and from different angles. I have experienced its different strands, traversed many of its uncharted paths and passed through quite a few of its cold deserts and its green pastures. I have tried all the tools and techniques of modern administration, experimented with ideas that have brought about a managerial revolution in some advanced countries, explored practically all the avenues that lead to efficiency and effectiveness in work. But all along, I have felt, and felt acutely, that there has been a grave national omission in attending to the fundamentals of our culture. Neither has a healthy field been prepared nor a healthy seed provided. In these circumstances, to expect a healthy plant to grow or to reap a good and sweet harvest, would be nothing but an exercise in fretting and fuming or resorting to wishful thinking or reposing faith in the gods of sand and stone.

Without a healthy civilizational base and pure and productive cultural roots, all our institutions, all our laws and the constitution, all our administrative organizations and all our judicial and legislative bodies are bound to be rendered frigid and fragile. No wonder we have today a vast machinery but no motivation, a bloated structure of administration but with a barren soul.

Crisis of Governance

Now a crisis of governance has overtaken us, and we seem to be overwhelmed by it. We do not know what tools to pick up and which technology to apply to set the machinery right. For the crisis is not merely structural; it is rooted in the rusty irons of our souls. It is a crisis not only of governance but also of the gov-

erned. It is a crisis of character, of commitment, and of conscience—a crisis that is in-built in the poor clay which our citizenry is generally made of.

Unfortunately, the post-1947 leadership has paid very little attention to the primary need of creating a well-meaning and well-motivated citizenry. It has, by and large, forgotten that it is only on the shoulders of such a citizenry that a strong and stable state can be built and a healthy social order brought about. This lapse has cost the nation dearly.

Let me give an example. To check criminalization of politics and the entry of criminal elements into the parliament, amendments were recently made to election rules. It was, *inter alia*, made obligatory on the part of the candidate to file an affidavit, with his nomination papers, giving full particulars of the criminal cases, if any, pending against him in any court of law. The objective was to ensure that the voter had full information about the antecedents, character and dispositions of the candidate.

To my mind, it was clear from the very beginning that this would be another exercise in futility and another measure of the self-deception to which our Election Commission, our courts, our arm-chair intellectuals and our newspaper columnists often resort to. And so it turned out to be.

In the course of elections to the fourteenth Lok Sabha, the candidates furnished the necessary information. Yet about a hundred of them, who were involved in criminal cases, got elected. About thirty of them had such serious charges as murder, dacoity, rape, kidnap and extortion pending against them.

The problem all along was the voters—the stuff that they were made of. Even prior to the

amendments, the involvement of some candidates in criminal cases was known to the voters. But most of them were willing to ignore it. They were either beneficiaries of the criminal activities or considered caste, creed and other parochial factors more important. Morality, rectitude, concern for the health of the polity or the future of the country mattered little in their calculations. Clearly, the outcome of the amendments could not be different from what it turned out to be. In fact, the number of MPs involved in criminal cases increased in the fourteenth Lok Sabha as compared to their number in the thirteenth. Some of them even became ministers in the Union Cabinet, holding important portfolios.

Unfortunately, our decision-makers—the Election Commission, Parliament and the Executive—did not have any inclination to deal with the real problem, which lay embedded in the voters' outlook; instead, they contented themselves with making a few amendments and entertaining a belief that the problem had been tackled.

For the last fifty-eight years, the leadership has generally been so superficial in its approach to the attainment of its declared constitutional objectives that it has not paused even for a moment to seriously think whether it is possible to establish an honest administration without an honest mind, a secular state without a secular society, a democratic structure without a democratic temper. A beautiful edifice cannot be raised without an instinct for beauty.

About seventy-eight years ago, C Rajagopalachari had warned the nation in no uncertain terms: 'We all ought to know that Swaraj will not be a better government or [mean] greater happiness for the people. Elections and their corruption, injustice, the power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration, will make a hell of life. ... Hope lies only in universal education by which right conduct will be developed. It is only if we succeed in this that Swaraj will mean happiness; otherwise, it will mean grinding injustice and tyranny of

wealth.'

Regrettably, this piece of sane advice and warning as well as others of this genre were not shown any respect beyond lip service. It was not realized that as long as the Indian mind was not reformed and the people remained what they were, no administrative, economic or constitutional reforms could save the country from the ever deepening quagmire of inefficiency, corruption and malpractices.

India Today: A Melange of Contradictions

What have been the consequences of all this? India today presents a confusing picture of contradictions and complexities.

Undoubtedly, in many respects we are better placed than we were at the dawn of independence. The average life expectancy of the people has increased substantially. The country has been largely free from famines, the frequent recurrences of which was its fate earlier. We have witnessed a 'green' as well as a 'white' revolution. Sardar Patel's integration of 561 princely states, which added 86 million people and 8 lakh square kilometres of territory to the Indian Union, and which was brought about without bloodshed, far outshines the much applauded feat of Bismarck in consolidating Germany through his policy of 'blood and iron'. Likewise, the remarkable contribution made by stalwarts like Jawaharlal Nehru, Govind Ballabh Pant and Rajendra Prasad particularly in the field of planning and scientific advancement, and the construction of new temples of development remain some of the most pleasing vistas that have been created in the course of our fifty-eight-year journey as an independent nation. The recent achievements in the arena of nuclear, space, telecommunication and information technologies have their own sagas. There has also been a significant diversification of production. The industrial and service sectors have witnessed a rapid expansion. From about 8% in 1950-51, the index of industrial production rose to about 155% in 1999-2000. The net national product attained a level in

1999-2000 which was 2.75 times higher than it was in 1950-51.

But even today India has the largest number of poor, illiterate, and malnourished people in the world. Out of 150 million children in the world who do not attend school, 130 million are Indians. Nearly half of our women are illiterate. About 640 million Indians do not have access to sanitation, about 170 million to safe drinking water and about 293 million to health services. Indian cities are among the most indisciplined and their slums are the worst and numerically the largest in the world. India has the highest rate of road accidents per 1,000 vehicles. About 40% of its fruits and vegetables is wasted in transit. As compared to China's per capita income of about \$990, India's per capita income is \$440. India's annual food-grain production is about 206 million tons while China's is 410 million tons, though India's cultivable area is double that of China. India formulated its population policy in 1952 and started executing it immediately. China started in 1970. Yet India's birth rate is 300% more than China's. Its cultivable land per person has come down from 0.21 hectare in 1960 to 0.10 hectare in 1990. India has more than 300 million people below the poverty line, China has just 30 million. India's ranking on UNDP's Human Development Index continues to be poor. According to its latest report, even Bangladesh has done better than India in the arena of infant and maternal mortality and school enrolment. Out of its population of about 1 billion only 12 million are tax payers. India is still reckoned as one of the most corrupt nations in the world.

Clearly, this is not the dawn which we had wished for free India—a dawn that has been badly disfigured by the dirty, thick and ever-lengthening patches of inner and outer corruption and social and moral sickness.

Crucial Questions

At the moment, the crucial questions that are staring us in the face are: How do we come out of the present depressing scenario? How do

we overcome the crisis of character, conscience, compassion and commitment? In other words, how do we improve our basic timbre and create a humane and enlightened citizenry?

Constitutionally Backed System of Ethics

In my recently published book *The Soul and Structure of Governance in India*, I have spelt out six items of reform which could substantially upgrade the ethos, outlook and calibre of our citizens. Here, on account of paucity of space, I would take up only one of these items, namely the creation of a constitutionally backed system of ethics, a kind of constitutional religion, which could serve the nation as a source of inspiration and keep the machinery of governance in correct orbit. Such a constitutional religion or system of ethics could be fashioned out of the interpretation given by Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi of religion being a way of life which is oriented towards service of man.

To make my point clear in this respect, I would draw the reader's attention first to what transpired between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr S Radhakrishnan on the subject of religion, and then to what Swami Vivekananda said about religion. Radhakrishnan posed three questions to Gandhi: 'What is your religion? How are you led to it? What is its bearing on social life?'

Gandhi replied to the first question thus: 'My religion is Hinduism, which, for me, is the religion of humanity and includes the best of all religions known to me.'

In response to the second question, Gandhi said: 'I take it that the present tense in this question has been purposely used, instead of the past. I am led to my religion through truth and non-violence. I often describe my religion as the religion of Truth. Of late, instead of saying God is Truth, I have been saying Truth is God. ... Denial of Truth we have not known. ... We are all sparks of Truth. The sum total of these sparks is indescribable, as yet unknown Truth, which is God. I am daily led nearer to it by constant prayer.'

To the third question, Gandhi replied: 'The bearing of this religion on social life is, or has to be, seen in one's daily social contact. To be true to such religion, one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all in life. Realization of Truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in and identification with this limitless ocean of life. Hence, for me there is no escape from social service; there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it. Social service here must be taken to include every department of life. In this scheme, there is nothing low, nothing high. For all is one, though we seem to be many.'

Gandhi went on to elaborate: 'The deeper I study Hinduism, the stronger becomes the belief in me that Hinduism is as broad as the universe. ... Something within me tells me that, for all the deep veneration I show to several religions, I am all the more a Hindu, nonetheless for it.'

Vivekananda's views are on the same wavelength as Gandhi's. For him 'Jiva is Shiva', service to man is service to God. The cornerstone of his ideal of 'Practical Vedanta' is that if one serves the sick, the poor or any other person in distress, one offers prayers to God in the highest form. In his own inimitable style he said: 'May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'

What objections could be taken to the above views of Gandhi and Vivekananda? In what way are they irreconcilable with the ideal of secularism? Why can they not be accommodated in our constitution in the form of an ethical system and made one of the constitutional goals for the attainment of which the state, society and the individual should specifically strive? Both Gandhi and Vivekananda base their religion on the highest principles of ethics and elevate it to a moral force that provides an impulse

for service to the poor, sick and needy, and have the effect of creating a compassionate man, 'a gentleness of the nature of mind and a pacifying and unifying love for all living things'.

Practical Vedanta, if its propagation has state backing, would certainly help in orienting the mind of the individual towards service, compassion, non-acquisitiveness and the realization that he is a part of the greater Self and that he should not do anything that has the effect of injuring a part of his own self. In other words, Practical Vedanta would help in creating a purer and nobler heart, which, working in unison with other purer and nobler hearts, would give rise to a force that would push society and the state towards purer and nobler goals. It has been rightly observed: 'If there is no purity, fairness and justice in your heart, these qualities will not be in your home; and if they are not in your home, they will not be in your society; and if they are not in your society, they will not be in your state.' All said and done, it is basically the individual who constitutes the building block of a nation.

Further, the principles on which Practical Vedanta rests are in perfect harmony with the constitutional goals of liberty, fraternity, equality and justice. In fact, they provide the spiritual basis of these goals. As regards the goal of equality, for example, if the same divinity permeates the personality of one person as well as that of another, they cannot but be equal. Likewise, it would be unthinkable for the divinity in one person to starve the same divinity in another person or do injustice to it in any manner.

Practical Vedanta also accords with the scientific spirit of our times. It promotes rationality, generates self-confidence and frowns upon fatalism: 'The old religion said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself. ... It is the coward and the fool who says, "This is fate".... But it is the strong man who stands up and says, "I will make my fate."'

Practical Vedanta, it may be noted, is not

in any way antithetical to the ideal of secularism as incorporated in the Indian constitution. Though associated with a particular religion, Practical Vedanta is nothing but spiritual secularism as well as spiritual pluralism. In his speech delivered at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda made it clear that Vedantists consider all religions to be true. In view of this and the Vedantic belief of 'One in All and All in One', the incorporation of Practical Vedanta in our constitution should not cause any misgivings in the minds of followers of other religions. For example, the Islamic belief in the one almighty God, Allah, does not differ substantially from the Vedantic belief in the one eternal Reality, permeating all animate and inanimate objects. In this connection, the observations of E B Havell, a great scholar of art and architecture, is significant:

Muhammadanism is one of the principal elements which are combined in the Indian synthesis. The fierce struggle which took place before it was fused together with Hinduism was born of racial antipathies and material interest rather than of intellectual or spiritual differences. Ages before the time of Muhammad Hinduism had settled for itself by the peaceful arguments of philosophy all the problems which Islam set out to determine by the sword. The missionaries of Ashoka were the first to prepare in Western Asia the soil in which Islam grew. Its iconoclastic madness was only the religious zeal of a primitive, warlike race inspired by the principles of Hinayana Buddhism as they were restated by the prophet of Mecca. The monotheistic idea which Islam propounded was as old as the Vedas, and even Buddhism itself had accepted it long before the Hegira.

Rabindranath Tagore has repeatedly drawn our attention to the ideal which the illuminated consciousness of our sages has bequeathed us: Brahman is Truth, Brahman is Wisdom, Brahman is Infinite; peace is in Brahman; goodness is in Brahman; and the unity of all beings is in Brahman. This ideal of unity of all beings, of peace, goodness and wisdom finds expression in a simple but telling prayer to the Absolute:

'He who is one, who is above all distinctions, who dispenses the inherent needs of men of all colours, who comprehends all things from their beginning to the end, let Him unite us to one another with wisdom, which is the wisdom of goodness.' Such an ideal or such a prayer can by no stretch of the imagination be considered antithetical to any of our constitutional objectives. On the other hand, its inclusion in the constitution would provide substance and strength to these objectives. It would inculcate a belief in the fundamental unity—unity in the diversity of man, unity in the diversity of nature, unity in the diversity of religion, and also unity of the individual self with the universal Self, of every single soul with what Emerson called the 'oversoul'. It would promote gentleness of spirit, nobility of temper and search for peace and balance in life. An overall culture of contentment and compassion would be generated in society which would have the effect of weakening, if not killing, the individual's disposition to be acquisitive and corrupt.

The ideal, the attributes of which I have briefly delineated above, is an insightful understanding of life, nature and the cosmic spirit which pervades the entire universe; it is not a religious precept. Its incorporation in the Indian constitution, either in the form of an ethical code or as a sort of constitutional religion, would do no violence to the concept of secularism. Instead, it would prop up true secularism, true morality and true commitment to the betterment of human conditions, not only in India but also in the rest of the world. Then one would begin to see, as Blake saw, the divine body in the face of every man, or feel, as Walt Whitman did in his 'Song of the Open Road':

The East and West are mine,
And the North and South are mine;
I am larger, better than I thought
In the faces of men and women
I see God, and
In my own face in the glass.

In view of what I have elaborated above, India should be constitutionally declared a

Vedantist state. If some sections have reservations about the expression *Vedantist*, it could be replaced by the word *ethical*.

Need for a Moral Compass

When we call Mahatma Gandhi the father of the nation and when we treat Vivekananda and Tagore as our cultural icons, why do we not accept the core of their philosophy and outlook as the guiding principles of our nation? If great minds like Arnold Tonybee, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman recognize the universal appeal of Vedanta, if its values accord with those required for maintaining the social, economic and ecological balance of the world, and if its concepts are wholly reconcilable with the findings of modern physics, why do we fight shy of making them our constitutional goals and ensure that the people do not remain without an inspiration or a mooring or a moral com-

pass? The present Indian state leaves the people generally cold and they do not feel any compunction of conscience in resorting to corruption and other malpractices.

Elevation of National Character

I have little doubt that if India is declared an ethical or Vedantist state, the imagination of the people would be captured and Vedantic values would get absorbed into the national psyche, thereby elevating the common man to a higher level of character and conduct and concern for the future of the country. He would then become a truly enlightened citizen contributing a great deal in bringing about a fair and just society by fair and just means. That would also give an image to India that would elicit the highest respect and reverence from the international community. ~

Awakening to Citizenship Responsibilities

Smt. Amala Shankar, artist and wife of the well-known Sri Uday Shankar, once came to see me with her twenty-year-old son, Anand. I asked her to purchase a copy of Vivekananda's *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*. I autographed it and gave it to Anand saying that he would find it inspiring.

A few days later, Smt. Shankar phoned to me in great joy and read out to me the letter she had just received from her son in Varanasi. He wrote saying that as his train left Howrah station, he occupied his seat and became absorbed in Vivekananda's book. The compartment was full of passengers, many of whom were railway staff. They were talking not all the time, mostly about grievances and complaints against the railway administration, and general abuse of the government. This continued for some time. Then suddenly one of them, a railway officer, seeing Anand absorbed in a book and not participating in their hilarity, asked him brusquely what he was reading, and snatching the book from him started reading it himself. Soon the book gripped him and he sat absorbed in it.

A little later, he looked up and shouted at the others to shut up and listen to what Vivekananda had to say. He read out passage after passage dealing with the nation's problems of poverty and illiteracy of the masses, the heartlessness and character-deficiency of the upper classes, and how this was to be eradicated and a progressive national life ensured. This created a remarkable transformation in the atmosphere of the compartment. The passengers became aware of the nation's problems and their own national responsibility. The flimsy light-hearted mood gave place to a sense of national urgency and personal involvement in it. Anand was deeply impressed and inspired by this experience. He had become instrumental in conveying the blessings of human excellence embedded in the Vivekananda literature to a section of India's citizens asleep to their citizenship privileges and responsibilities.

—adapted from Swami Ranganathananda

Enlightened Religion

MUHAMMAD SHAIK GHOUSE

It is a well-known fact that religion is a way of life that provides opportunities for the pursuit of higher values. The enlightened religious view envisages closer cooperation, greater understanding and mutual assistance among different faiths. It is not far from the truth to say that India is an ethnological museum and an epitome of civilizations wherein live people of diverse faiths, languages, colours and customs. Owing to ignorance, illiteracy, superstitions and baseless customs many people in many areas of our country are groping in darkness. As one light enkindles another, the necessity of the propagation and practice of the noble and basic principles of all religions in our secular country is a *sine qua non* for dispelling the dark clouds of dissensions, feuds, passions and tensions—and even sporadic skirmishes between faiths—to establish amity, sympathy, peace and tranquillity among our religious communities and in the country at large.

The antisocial instincts of man are too insistent to be effectively checked, except by inner moral standards and fear of God. Knowingly or unknowingly man imbibes, assimilates and reflects in his own personality the impact of the surrounding society.

Men are free and equal; each man has a right to live according to his own liking. But freedom does not mean licence. The enlightened religious view stresses that no one shall hurt the life, health or freedom of another person. It teaches values like self-sacrifice, benevolence, charity and service. A famous Chinese saying runs as follows: 'If there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace

in the world.'

Man's most precious gift is the faculty of discrimination, with which he can distinguish between right and wrong and truth and falsehood. When man strives to his utmost to move Godward, God will give him every help and support. A person must first strive hard to put himself in a position to reach the light of God. Those who deliberately sin against their conscience and reject God's truth cannot escape the invisible law of retribution. Man's success or failure, prosperity or poverty depend upon whether he keeps his soul pure or corrupts it.

The Quran says: 'Nothing belongs to man for which he does not strive';¹ 'God does not change the condition of a people unless they first change that which is in their hearts' (13.11); 'For each soul is that which it has earned and against each soul is only that which it has deserved' (2.286). Furthermore, 'No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another' (53.38). As the *Amritabindu Upanishad* points out, 'It is the mind alone that binds or frees a person: when it is attached to sense objects it binds, but when it is detached from them it frees.'² So, says the Bhagavadgita, 'Let a man raise himself by his own self; let him not debase himself. For he is himself his friend and himself his foe.'³ Thus goes a proverb: 'Sow an action, reap a tendency. Sow a tendency, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.' This is the reason why Swami Vivekananda says we are the makers of our own destiny; what we have done we can also undo—and we alone can do it.

The above ideas are echoed in the words of great thinkers and men of art: 'Man when perfected is the best of animals, but when separated from law and justice he is the worst of all' (Plato); 'He who is unable to live in society or

has no need of it because he is sufficient in himself must be either a beast or a god and is no part of the state' (Aristotle); 'Mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven' (Milton); 'Heighten your personality through spirituality to such an extent that God Almighty may be pleased to consult you on what is to be done next' (Iqbal).

Enlightened Religion according to Islam

Prophet Muhammad says in the *sunnah* ('saying and doings of the Prophet'): 1) 'The Muslim who lives in the midst of society and bears with patience the afflictions that come to him is better than the one who shuns society and cannot bear any wrong done to him'; 2) 'The believer in God is he who is not a danger to the life and property of anybody'; 3) 'He is not a believer who takes his fill while his neighbour starves'; 4) 'Live together; do not turn against each other. Make things easy for others and do not put obstacles in each other's way'; 5) 'All creatures of God form the family of God and he is the best loved of God who loves best His creatures'; 6) 'O Lord! Lord of my life and of everything in the universe! I affirm that all human beings are brothers unto one another'; 7) 'Respect the ways of God and be affectionate to the family of God'; 8) 'The believers, in their love and sympathy for one another, are like one body. When any part of it is affected the whole body suffers. Thus as a community we have to live and behave like one physiological entity.'

The Prophet said three things were necessary to enter the Islamic faith: 1) to help others even when he is himself economically hard pressed; 2) to pray ardently for the peace of all mankind; and 3) to administer justice to one's own self (so self-responsibility is also the cardinal principle of Islam as it is of Hinduism).

The teachings of Islam are a summation and consummation of the rudimentary principles of all revelations in their pristine purity right from Hazrat Adam (who could be equated with Adi Manu of Hinduism) down to Prophet Muhammad. The Quran says: 'None of our

revelations do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but we substitute something better or similar. Know you not that Allah has power over all things?'⁴

Islam does not permit any gap between precept and practice. What is theorized must be practised scrupulously. 'You enjoin right conduct on the people and forget (to practise) yourselves, and yet you study the scriptures! Do you have any understanding?' (2.44).

Though sectarianism is diametrically opposed to the true spirit of Islam, many sects with minor differences crept into the religion without touching its fundamental principles, such as one God (Allah), one book (Quran), one prophet (Rasul), one shrine (Kaba), one pilgrimage (*haj*) and one annual fast (Ramzan). 'The believers are but a single brotherhood' (49.10).

The distinctive character of Islam is that it enjoins emphatically upon its followers to be true Muslims within and without the mosque and to lead their lives in consonance with the principles of the Quran and the *sunnah*. 'O you who believe! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly, and follow not the footsteps of the evil one, for he is to you an avowed enemy' (2.208).

Religious Practices in Islam

A person's character depends upon his nature and nurture. Islam recognizes the fact that while food is a must for the strengthening of the body, prayer is essential for the nourishment of the soul. In Islam the criterion of a person's respectability is his piety and purity, not pedigree, wealth, power or status. 'The most honoured among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you' (49.13); 'O you people! Adore your guardian Lord who created you and those who came before you, that you may have the chance to learn righteousness' (2.21).

There are no idols in Islam and image worship is totally absent in mosques. Devotees offer *namaz* (or *salat*, prayer) only to the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent Allah. Islam also banished all false barriers of race, status and

wealth, and firmly believes that the entire humanity is united as one family before God through *salat* and *haj*. In fact, it wants to unite the whole of humankind under one banner. The tested tenets of *salat* and *haj* are efficient and effective in maintaining unity, equality and universality not only in theory but in actual practice in all times and climes.

Prayer is an important discipline in every religion, but each religion has its own particular way of practising it. One thing, however, is common to all of them: regularity. As a Sanskrit saying has it, '*Na śreyo niyamam vinā*; There is no good without order.' In the *Yoga Sūtras* it is said: '*Sa tu dīrghakāla nairantarya satkāraśevito dīrghabhūmiḥ*.'⁵ Constant effort and great devotion are required in order to attain perfection.

Islam requires its adherents to offer *namaz* five times daily at fixed hours. The practice is obligatory and not optional. Devotees who are in good health are expected to follow this prescription till they breathe their last, so that they can train themselves physically, morally and spiritually. *Namaz* consists of individual as well as collective prayer and is an effective device to integrate the entire community. Those who sincerely and devotedly perform *namaz* gain in qualities of head and heart and become useful to society, while others lay themselves open to the risk of becoming sinful.

At the collective *namaz* performed in mosques no difference is made between king and subject, rich and poor, or learned and ignorant. All are treated equally and all offer prayers standing on the same carpet. This is an established and inviolable rule.

There are some parallels between Hindu prayer and *namaz*. A Hindu prostrates before God touching eight limbs of the body to the ground (*sashthanga/sarvanga namaskara*). This is strikingly similar to the *sijda* posture in *namaz*. Although *sarvanga* prostration is disallowed in Islam, Muslims do touch the ground with eight parts of the body: the forehead, nose, two hands, two knees and two feet. In the different postures of *namaz* too similarities with yogic

asanas can be seen. Among them *vajrasana*, called *kha-i-da* in the context of *namaz*, is important. Without it *namaz* is not complete.

The *haj* is another instrument with which Islam has been able to banish every kind of discrimination between man and man. The manner of its performance as laid down by Prophet Muhammad under divine guidance eliminates all distinctions based on privilege. Distances are eliminated, differences are made conspicuous by their absence, and ample opportunity is provided to the devotees for getting to know each other and for exchanging views face to face. The *haj* pilgrimage is such an effective institution that it has not only consolidated the ideal of universal brotherhood among Muslims but has also promoted in them a sense of international citizenship. The Hindu idea of *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam* is thus actualized in Islam.

Similarities between Hinduism and Islam

Just as there are points of resemblance in the religious practices of Hinduism and Islam, we also find parallels in the statements they make about spiritual principles. For example: 1) '*Bhargo devasya dhīmahi*; We meditate on the light of God', says the Gayatri mantra. The Quran says, '*Allahu nurussamavathi val ard*; God is the light of the sky and the earth.' Here *bhargah* and *nur* both mean divine light. 2) The Upanishadic truth of '*Ekamevādvitīyam brahma*; Brahman is one without a second' is quite similar to '*La ilaha illallah*; There is no God except Allah', when the latter statement is understood in its real spirit. *Eko devah* is another way of saying *Allahu ahad* ('God is one'). 3) '*Jātasya hi dhrūvo mṛtyuḥ*; Death is certain to one that is born'—so believes the Hindu. The Muslim knows that '*Kullunafsin zaikhatul maut*; Every soul shall have a taste of death.' 4) The Hindu prays, '*Tamaso mā jyotirgamaya*; Lead me from darkness to Light.' So does the Muslim too: '*Minazzulumati illannur*; My Lord, lead from darkness to light.' 5) Hinduism says, '*Sarvam khalvidam brahma*; All this is verily Brahman.' Islam says, '*Wakanallahu bikulli*

shayyim muhita; God has surrounded all.' 6) The Sanskrit *śāntiḥ* has its equivalent in the Arabic *assalam*.

On a more temporal level, our scriptures deal with human equality and its spiritual basis. All living beings have the same divine essence within; the same reality underlies all regardless of the outer differences. The Bhagavadgita says: 'The fourfold order was created by Me according to the divisions of quality and action.'⁶ So 'Know Me as the Knower of the field in all fields, O Bhārata' (13.2). In fact, 'Men of wisdom see with an equal eye a learned and humble brahmin, a cow, an elephant, or even a dog and an outcaste' (5.18). The Mahabharata also speaks about the unity of the human race to this effect: '*Ekam varṇamidam sarvaṁ pūrvamāsīd-yudhiṣṭhira; Kriyā karma vibhāgena cātur-varṇyaṁ vyavasthitam*. In ancient times all human beings belonged to one caste, O Yudhishtira. The four castes were formed owing to difference in their actions.' The Quran sums it all up: '*Kanannasu ummatau wahida*; Mankind is a single nation.'⁷

Real Enlightenment

Now who is a really enlightened person? How do the scriptures describe him? One major criterion of enlightenment is a sense of equality. According to the Bhagavadgita, 'He is a perfect yogi who sees everything equally and judges others' pleasure and pain by the same standard that he applies to himself'⁸ and 'He who, established in oneness, worships Me as abiding in all beings, that yogi lives in Me, whatever may be the condition he is in' (6.31). Such a yogi is called a *sufi* in Persian. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'An ignorant person says, "Oh, God is there—very far off." The man of Knowledge knows that God is right here, very near, in the heart; that He has assumed all forms and dwells in all hearts as their Inner Controller.'⁹

The enlightened religious attitude necessitates votaries to observe certain basic rules of good conduct. It promotes temperance and moderation in all aspects of life and in all

spheres of activity ('Eat and drink, but exceed not'¹⁰). The teachings of all enlightened religions are simple and understandable, though not always very easy to practise. They demand that the devotee put his discriminatory powers to use so that he keeps himself pure and strong in character, simple and frugal in habits, independent but loyal in social relationships, and thus become useful in public life. Hinduism exhorts its followers to 'Speak the truth. Practise virtue.'¹¹ In the same vein the Quran says: 'Do not mix up truth with falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know.'¹²

We all know these things, but many of us hardly live up to them. It is as they say in Sanskrit: '*Śṛṇvanto'pi na śṛṇvanti, jānanto'pi na jānanti, paśyanto'pi na paśyanti*. Hearing they hear not, knowing they know not, seeing they see not.' Only an enlightened eye sees properly. Says the Quran: '*Summum, bukmun, umyun fa hum layargiun*; (They are) deaf, dumb (and) blind, and will not come to the right path' (2.18). But we must not lose hope. The Quran says: 'Allah desires for your ease; He desires not hardships for you' (2.185); 'On no soul God places a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns and suffers every ill that it earns' (2.286). We must press on with our efforts, firm in the faith that God will help us.

An Enlightened View of Ultimate Reality

Both Hinduism and Islam speak in unison, as it were, about the nature of God. Hinduism holds that God is one, eternal and second to none. In the same spirit, Islam declares that 'Allah is one. Allah is He on whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him.'

The specific name of the absolute and eternal God in Hinduism is 'Om'. Having neither number nor gender, it is unique. No other sound represents God as does the syllable *Om*. The nameless, formless, changeless, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent God is signified by the Sanskrit letter *Om*. It is composed of three sounds, *a*, *u* and *m*. The Bhagavadgita

says: 'Om ityekākṣaraṁ brahma; Brahman is the monosyllable Om.'¹³

The same place that Om occupies in Sanskrit and Hinduism, the word *Allah* occupies in Arabic and Islam. This word too, like Om, has neither number nor gender, and hence is unique. No other word in the Arabic language represents God as does the word *Allah*. It too signifies the nameless, formless, changeless, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent God. It is also a composite of three letters, *alif*, *lam* and *he*. That is why it is said: 'La ilaha illallah; There is no God except Allah.' This is a fundamental belief in Islam. This specific name 'Allah' is firmly established in Islam. Notwithstanding the minor differences among Shias, Sunnis and the seventy-three sects, all Muslims strictly adhere to the specific name Allah for God Almighty. Just as Hindus believe that the syllable *Om* is the ultimate symbol of the Godhead, Muslims believe that the word *Allah* is the name of God.

Comparing Two Enlightened Religions

Strange to say, the very appellations 'Hinduism' and 'Mohammedanism' are both misnomers. The religion that passes under the name of Hinduism was not established by any human being or incarnation of God. It is the Religion Eternal. So it is proper to call it Sanatana Dharma. Actually, the word *Hindu* has more to do with geography than with religion and is not found in any of the authentic scriptures. The followers of Sanatana Dharma ought to be called Sanatana-dharmis or Vedantins, as Swami Vivekananda said. Likewise with Islam. Prophet Muhammad never claimed that he established a new religion. He categorically said that it was God's religion and not his. As the Quran says, 'Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam.'¹⁴ So the religion that Muhammad propagated should be properly called Islam, not Mohammedanism, and its followers must be called Muslims instead of Mohammedans.

In one of its final verses the Bhagavadgita sums up the gist of all spiritual endeavours: 'Re-

nounce all duties and take refuge in Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sins, grieve not.'¹⁵ It means the devotee should take sole refuge in God and follow Him faithfully. It is the same with Islam too. The very word *Islam* means submission of one's will to the will of God. A Muslim is expected to surrender himself to God and uphold the truth of the absolute unity of God. This eternal truth of Islam is called *dīn-e-haq*.

Devout Hindus believe in the revelation of the Veda and try to follow its injunctions. In the same way, pious Muslims believe that the Quran is a revealed scripture and follow its teachings carefully. Thus, both lead purposeful lives and become blessings to their respective communities. As a matter of fact, this is the test of a religion's validity: if its teachings are conducive to human welfare and bring about lasting good, then it is considered genuine. Hinduism and Islam both pass this test. There is no scope for doubt regarding the authenticity of these two enlightened religions, for both have produced gigantic characters who have brought great good to human society. So far nobody has been able to disprove the authenticity of the basic tenets of these two religions.

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The Scientific Temper: Indispensable to Enlightened Citizenship

DR JAYANT V NARLIKAR

Introduction

It is often stated that we live in the age of science, that science and technology are shaping our very existence. No one described the impact of science and technology (S&T) more graphically than Alvin Toffler in his book *Future Shock*. I summarize in my own words his description of the way science and technology have come increasingly to determine the conditions under which we live and why this circumstance has come like something of a shock to human societies the world over.

Let us do some elementary arithmetic! Divide the last 50,000 years or so of known human existence on this planet into some 800 human lifespans each lifespan comprising 62.5 years. Take this typical human lifespan as a representative unit of time. Of these 800 time units, for which some historical information is available, the first 650 or so were spent by man living in primitive conditions. The art of writing is not more than 70 lifespans old and that of printing is only 6 lifespans old. The electric motor is 2 lifespans old. In fact, most of the things we use in our daily existence involve technology much younger, some of it not more than 1 lifespan old. The discovery of atomic energy, the use of space technology and the proliferation of computers are all less than a lifespan old.

This indicates how rapidly scientific ideas are being translated into technological inventions and how rapidly we are having to assimilate them in our lives. Yet this speed is not proving entirely beneficial to society. Rather, the situation resembles that of a person at a buffet dinner confronted with a feast of excellent dishes served in rapid succession. The banquet may look dazzling but the diner ought to pick and

choose keeping in mind the limitations of health and digestive capacity. This human society has not yet learnt to do.

The diner in the above example may ask: 'How do I know what is good for me, and how much, and what items should I avoid?' Who is to tell him? For the twenty-first-century citizen, this need for advice can be satisfied by a proper society-science interaction. Science communication in various forms can help inform the citizen about what is happening in S&T, while the development of the scientific temper can help shape the individual's attitude towards this information. In fact, as I will argue later in this article, the scientific temper is essential to the well-being of both society and the individual.

Science Communication

Information holds the key to facing the future shock. Whenever new discoveries in technology take place, it is necessary to understand their full implications. Very often a technology is announced but the science it is based on is not so well publicized. Even leaders in the field sometimes fail to grasp the potential of a discovery. There are famous examples. Thomas Alva Edison, the great inventor, did not believe that alternating currents would play any useful role. Lord Rutherford, who discovered that the composition of an atomic nucleus can be probed and transmuted, did not believe that the discovery had a practical implication. Within three decades, the discovery was put to a highly destructive use—a nuclear holocaust—as well as to peaceful use in an atomic reactor for generating energy. After the early rocket experiments many distinguished scientists believed that space technology would play no important role.

Examples like these suggest that there needs to be a lot of public discussion between scientists, leaders, and decision-makers in society whenever any new scientific discovery is made or is in the offing. What are the future implications of the discovery? Is it likely to be harmful to society? Does it need to be channelled in a certain direction? In the physical sciences, nuclear studies have already shown us, perhaps too late, why one needs to exercise control on the direction of research. The technique that enables one to know the sex of the child before it is born had to be restricted because of its misuse. Evidently, these are situations wherein scientists have to come down from their labs and studies to talk practical matters with society.

Science communication is therefore extremely important—much more important than appreciated by the common man. Not only do scientists need to come out and communicate, there can be a whole class of communicators who are basically good at communication, who read scientific literature or consult with the experts and then tell the others what they learn. Today it is possible to use different media for science communication—the radio, TV, the Internet, lectures, movies. A number of voluntary organizations have come up to pursue this objective, but much more needs to be done.

India has a number of such organizations, national as well as in states and towns. The Government of India has supported such activities through Vigyan Prasar, which is under the Department of Science and Technology. Then there is the National Centre for Science Communicators, headquartered in Mumbai, which played a very active role in the nucleation of the International Union of Science Communicators (IUSC). I am happy to say that the IUSC was recently established with headquarters in Mumbai.

Science Journalism

An important arm of science communication is science journalism. It is sadly much ne-

glected in India. Reporting of scientific events is allotted only a very small percentage of newspaper space. Very often a science news item is simply taken over from foreign sources 'by arrangement'. Clearly, science is not a priority in the minds of newspaper producers or editors.

Investigative journalism these days covers many cases of corruption, crime, spying, conspiracy and war stories. Once in a while, the scientific world too offers challenging and highly interesting cases. In a typical case, a claim to an important discovery is made but without proper substantiation. In some situations the result is based on fraud while in others it is a genuine mistake. There are also instances of scientific plagiarism. So it is not a case of 'no news is good news'. Perhaps journalists could at least cover these examples of malpractice in science! I may give a classic example from the past.

In 1903 the eminent French physicist R Blondlot claimed to have discovered a new type of radiation called N-rays (*N* for the town of Nancy, where the discovery was supposedly made). Coming shortly after the discovery of X-rays in Germany, this discovery of new rays with remarkable properties was hailed widely in France, partly because of the rivalry between the two neighbouring countries in many fields including science. N-rays became fashionable and a large number of research papers on them began to appear in French journals. Soon Blondlot was awarded the prestigious Lalande Prize by the French Academy for this discovery.

However, a scientific experiment is nothing if it is not repeatable. This was not happening in the case of N-rays. The rays could not be detected in similar experiments in England or Germany. What was wrong? In order to find out, British scientists requested R W Wood, a distinguished American scientist, to visit Blondlot's laboratory and inspect the experiment. (A scientist from a rival country like Britain or Germany would not have been welcome in France!) Wood made the trip and found that the claim for N-rays was totally false. His own account of how he detected this fraud makes a

very interesting reading even for the layman.

The temptation to make spectacular but fraudulent claims is stronger nowadays than it was a hundred years ago, when times were relatively placid. This is because a scientist is judged by his performance much more stringently today than he used to be in the last century. Awards, peer support, promotions, and project grants are all linked with performance. Thus, if Mr X has made an extraordinary discovery he stands to attract a lot of financial support as well as wield much power in scientific circles. So there is a strong temptation for him to rush out and make premature announcements. In spite of these temptations, science has remained relatively clean mainly because a scientific fraud is detected sooner than later. However, such cases as do turn up from time to time need to be widely reported to the public.

Another related area where investigative journalism can do a lot is in testing the claims of UFOs as extra-terrestrial spacecrafts. The so-called unidentified flying objects are reported in the press from time to time. The common man gets excited by the suggestion that these are spaceships from some alien civilizations beyond our Earth. The real explanations could be quite mundane: the object may be Venus, or an optical illusion (like a mirage), or a man-made spy satellite, or simply the figment of a highly fertile imagination.

Philip Klass, a Washington DC journalist, has written a book entitled *UFOs Explained*, in which he has given absorbing details of investigative journalism which removed the mystery around several such claims. He has also shown how the so-called photographic evidence can be faked. Indeed, in some cases the UFO sighting has been fraudulently turned to material gains.

Another set of events which generated considerable excitement around twenty-five years ago related to the apparently strange events occurring in the so-called Bermuda Triangle. These were debunked by science journalism, although in India they still exist in the popular imagination.

The Scientific Temper

A few years ago I attended an international inter-disciplinary conference dealing with some issues man will have to face in the twenty-first century. Naturally, topics such as global environment, population control, food availability, communications, education, and science and technology featured prominently. As speaker after speaker covered a variety of subjects of great relevance to the main theme of the conference, I increasingly began to feel like a diner at a sumptuous meal searching desperately for that tiny but vital item, the salt shaker. That pinch of salt is the scientific temper, which is such an essential component of man's mental framework in his struggles to face the challenges of the present and the future.

What is meant by the scientific temper? Why is its relevance being felt *now* rather than in the past? Is it an individual trait or does it also extend to societies, cultures, civilizations? To what extent is it prevalent today? What can be done to make it more widespread? These are the questions I shall try to answer. But the bottom line has been stated very effectively by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Discovery of India*:

The impact of science and the modern world have brought a greater appreciation of facts, a more critical faculty, a weighing of evidence, a refusal to accept tradition merely because it is tradition. ... But even today it is strange how we suddenly become overwhelmed by tradition, and the critical faculties of even intelligent men cease to function. ... Only when we are politically and economically free will the mind function normally and critically.¹

This was written during the British Raj. Today we live in a free India which is feeling its way towards economic prosperity. Yet we are still a long way away from achieving that scientific outlook which Nehru considered so essential for our future well-being. To understand what the scientific outlook is all about, let us first see how science itself works.

There are three steps in the progressive march of science: experiment and observation, theoretical interpretation, and prediction of

new results. This sequence is endless. One performs an experiment in the laboratory or observes some natural phenomenon and then tries to interpret it in terms of a theoretical framework. If the attempt succeeds, then one tries to make new predictions that future experiments or observations will verify. If the success of the theory continues, one keeps believing in the theory. *However, one must never think that the theory will hold good forever.* There is always a possibility that a future experiment will disagree with the present predictions of the theory, in which case it may have to be abandoned or modified or replaced by a new and better theoretical framework. Thus, Newton's law of gravitation continued successfully until some sophisticated tests in the solar system showed its inadequacies and it was replaced by Einstein's theory of relativity. It was in this connection that Sir Hermann Bondi, the well-known astronomer, remarked:

The essential thing in science is for the scientist to think up a theory. There is no way of mechanizing this process; there is no way of breaking it down into a science factory. It always requires human imagination, and indeed in science we pay the highest respect to creativity, to originality. It is, of course, clear that since every theory must live dangerously, the casualty rate is pretty high. So we do not honour scientists for being right; it is never given to anybody to be always right. We honour scientists for being original, for being stimulating, for having started a whole line of work. Science is the most human of endeavours because it depends on co-operation, it depends on people testing each other's work and it depends on people taking notice of each other.²

Bondi's comment needs one clarification. It does not mean that any Tom, Dick or Harry can propose 'new ideas', claiming to be better than Newton or Einstein. I get such ideas from dozens of people—vague flights of imagination with no backing of quantitative facts—in the post. Bondi here means ideas carefully worked out with rigorous mathematics and having the benefit of confirmation by physical facts. In fact

there is no simple way to truth, whatever it may be. One needs patience in putting together whatever understanding of nature our society has acquired and build on it towards a greater understanding.

The scientific outlook has evolved from this practice of science: it relies on factual evidence and statements that can be checked against established truth. It allows for pragmatism, that is, the willingness to drop a paradigm if it fails the test of facts and adopt a better one if it meets all factual checks. However, the scientific outlook need not be the prerogative of the scientist alone. After all, it owes its origin to human curiosity about nature, and as such, every one of us, whether a scientist or not, can be scientific. Indeed, just as progress in science could be achieved only when the scientific outlook prevailed over innate conservatism, so in human society this outlook acts as an antidote to the evils of prejudice and superstition.

Science and Superstition

Superstitions are born out of ignorance of how nature functions. Science is dedicated to the unravelling of the mysteries of nature. When a particular mystery is solved, we should expect the superstitions based on it to disappear. Yet, this does not always happen in practice because of the lack of scientific outlook in the typical human being. I give below one example.

The early human societies ascribed occult powers to planets. This assumption arose from ignorance of what planets are and how they move. Now that astronomy has answered all of the questions raised about planets by the primitive man, we should expect this assumption to be regarded as groundless. But this has not happened. Even in technologically advanced countries this belief persists among sections of the educated classes. In the mid-1970s a group of leading scientists including several Nobel laureates in the West signed a circular denouncing the very basis of this belief. I give below an extract from their statement:

It is simply a mistake to imagine that the forces

exerted by stars and planets at the moment of birth can in any way shape our futures. Neither is it true that the positions of distant heavenly bodies make certain days or periods more favourable to particular kinds of action, or that the sign under which one was born determines one's compatibility or incompatibility with other people. ... In these uncertain times many long for the comfort of having guidance in making decisions. They would like to believe in a destiny predetermined by astral forces beyond their control. However, we must all face the world, and we must realize that our futures lie in ourselves, and not in the stars.³

Do planets influence human destiny? The subject of astrology is based on a positive answer to this question. But how will a scientist go about testing the hypothesis that the answer is yes? He will not be satisfied with a single person's prediction based on a single horoscope. First he will require a set of well-defined rules on which such predictions are based. The rules should be unambiguous so that different persons make the same prediction from the same horoscope. Then he will need to be convinced that these rules work in a statistically significant manner to discount the possibility of the prediction being right purely by chance. This will require a systematic study of a large number of such trials under different conditions. Further, it is necessary to cast the prediction in a well-focused form that can be tested. Such tests as have been conducted so far by scientists have yielded negative results. But again, it is not always necessary to call upon a professional scientist to perform such tests. The educated common man can himself sift through the evidence provided he adopts an objective outlook. Let me give one illustrative example.

A comprehensive test was conducted by Bernie Silverman, who sampled the marriage and divorce rates in Michigan in 1967 and 1968. His sample was large: 2,978 marriages and 478 divorces. The birth charts of the couples involved were examined by astrologers, who were asked to opine on whether the horoscopes matched sufficiently to warrant the con-

clusion that their marriages would be long-lasting and happy. The astrologers (using whatever criteria they had) made out two lots, one with matching and the other with conflicting horoscopes; those in the former category would have a stable and happy marriage whereas those in the latter would not. These 'predictions' were then compared with the actual state of marriages of these couples, some of whom, as stated earlier, were happily married while others had divorces or broken marriages. It was then a simple matter to test the argument against the actual and predicted classifications of the samples. Rigorous statistical analyses demonstrated that there was no correlation between the predictions and the actual results.

I could go on with other examples to illustrate that astrology has been tested for the scientific criterion of predictability in numerous ways by numerous researchers on numerous occasions—and has always been found wanting.

Individually, or as part of a larger group, man has always lived by certain traditional beliefs. These beliefs are inextricably mixed with his cultural and religious heritage. Inevitably conflicts arise whenever the critical faculty inherent in the scientific temper is applied to those beliefs. Some conflicts arise because the beliefs or the rituals such beliefs are associated with had a rational basis in the olden days but which they no longer possess today. Some rituals may have had a symbolic or even a practical meaning in the social ambience of several centuries ago, but today they have become irrelevant. So what is one to do when such conflicts arise?

'Tradition' upholds values such as the individual's commitment to society, society's responsibility for the well-being of its members, and the joint duty of the individual and society to preserve the surrounding environment. Armed with these values man can assess what science has to offer; he can make judicious decisions as to what to accept and what to reject. This is where the scientific temper comes to the help of society as a whole.

The technologically advanced nations of

the West have been experiencing the ill effects of the uncontrolled impact of science and technology on society. Destructive nuclear arsenals, excessive industrial pollution, enforced idleness brought about by automation, and the consequent psychological problems of mechanization are there for all to see. Does this mean that we must put a stop to all scientific and technological development? Such a response, already advocated by a few in the developing nations, indicates a panic reaction. With the traditional virtues mentioned above as guiding principles it should be possible to follow a rational path that skirts round the pitfalls.

The Present Status

Let me review briefly how we Indians stand today vis-a-vis Nehru's remark that 'only when we are politically and economically free will the mind function normally and critically'. A dispassionate survey presents a mixed picture.

As I mentioned earlier, we have several NGOs devoting their efforts to spreading rationalism and eradicating superstitions. There are organizations which conduct public awareness programmes through lectures, demonstrations, street plays, experiments debunking miracles, articles and books on the importance of the scientific temper, and so on. The National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) in New Delhi has been supporting such programmes in an imaginative fashion. The NCSTC was responsible for making 28 February the National Science Day, in commemoration of C V Raman's discovery on that date in 1928 which fetched him the Nobel Prize in physics. On this day (and throughout the week covering this date) several public awareness programmes are conducted across the country and scientific institutions keep open house with audio-visuals on their work, exhibitions, lectures, etc. Some institutions organize special quiz programmes and competitions for school-children.

While several such governmental and non-governmental efforts are going on in an or-

ganized manner, what is the mindset of the man in the street? Can we confidently assert that in the half century since independence we have made a significant dent in the wall of superstitions that have steadily thickened over the centuries? We may remember, for example, the great social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his crusade against the practice of sati. But there still take place isolated incidents of this practice, and they attract crowds of believers.

Nor is superstition confined to villages. Not a long time ago, the episode of idols of Lord Ganesha drinking milk drew large crowds in Delhi, Mumbai and other cities with even some ministers expressing their wonder and joy at the sight. It did not take long to debunk the phenomenon in terms of known science, but the spontaneity of belief was a give-away that betrayed the fact that the veneer of science and technology on society was indeed very thin.

But perhaps of greater concern is the *rising trend* towards superstitions. Several symptoms of this trend can be cited:

- More marriages are being decided by the matching of horoscopes than were done a generation ago. I know of parents whose marriages did not pass through the 'horoscope filter', but whose children feel it is a necessary criterion for their marriage.



Easier
to
match
horoscopes
than
hearts!

- With new technology, new superstitions are getting hold of society. A recent rage is Vastushastra and its Chinese counterpart, Feng Shui. Influential politicians and leaders of soci-

ety have been swayed by these new cults though none of their claims have passed scientific scrutiny.

· Despite the scientific debunking of godmen's miracles, a large section of even educated urbanites continues to believe in 'babas' who demonstrate their superhuman powers through miracles. This is an area on which science journalism could bring its investigative skills to bear. So far it has registered moderate success, but much more needs to be done.

· The legitimization of astrology as a science by the University Grants Commission is another symptom of this unfortunate trend. The UGC uses the term 'Vedic astrology', implying that the subject is of Vedic origin. All historical evidence, however, shows that planetary astrology using horoscopes came from the West—from Greece, Babylon, and such places.

Miracles of Science Benefit All

One could easily enlarge the above list. Granted that there are problems with excessive reliance on automation, environmental hazards with indiscriminate use of technology, and serious dangers to society from continuing certain areas of scientific research. But this does not mean that we turn away from the scientific path and go back to age-old superstitions which have been proved invalid.

Indeed, at first sight these problems before us appear to be formidable, if not insurmountable. Yet we have only to look at the remarkable progress of science over the last few decades to see that a properly channelled scientific approach holds out hope for the future. The achievements of space technology with such highlights as manned trips to Moon, landing on Mars and the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) programme in our country, the rapid growth of communications which has dramatically brought far corners near, the advances in medicine, biology, agriculture—are they not scientific miracles happening before our own eyes and achieved during a time span of less than a generation? Unlike the so-called

miracles of so-called godmen, *the miracles of science benefit not one single individual, but the whole of humanity*. They benefit the poor as well as the rich. The invention of electric power not only runs the gadgets of the rich in cities, it also provides light to the poor in remote villages.

The developed nations have recognized these facts and they not only support science in general but also continue to encourage basic research, which at first may appear 'useless' but may lead to useful applications like those just mentioned. For us to ignore basic research at this stage would mean that we will have to keep importing new ideas from abroad. This would be contrary to our policy of self-reliance. India has plenty of talent for basic research, most of which is untapped. Suitable support for basic research will unearth this talent and bring in its own rewards in the long term, if not immediately. I will use an analogy to illustrate my point. Imagine a country which has vast untapped resources of oil, but will not search for these for reasons of heavy financial outlay. Such a country will forever be dependent on imported oil. And finally, let me emphasize that basic research does not require heavy financial outlay when compared to its rich potential. We must, however, ensure with adequate safeguards that the research produced is of first-class quality.

Near the end of His exposition of the Gita, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, 'Having reflected on what I have said fully do as you wish.' In a sense this is what the scientific temper calls upon us to do: to weigh all the evidence and then decide what is best. I am confident that if—and only if—we are not blinded by tradition or dazzled by science but keep our vision open and our minds alert, our country will make a triumphant march towards progress in this century. ~

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Enlightened Citizenship: A Feminist Perspective

DR. INDIRA RAMARAO

The concept of citizenship is generally associated with acquisition of *rights* by individuals. In a democratic set-up citizenship involves three sets of rights: civil, political and social. It is only when an individual is entitled to the enjoyment of these rights in the true sense of the term that any discussion on citizenship becomes meaningful. This is especially true in the case of women.

Conferment of *civil rights* forms the very essence of democratic governance. 'Equality before law' is the most vital component of citizenship. *Political rights* refer to the extension of franchise. The right of citizens to participate in governance by electing their representatives is the foundation on which the democratic structure is built. By conferring *social rights* the state shows that it cares for its citizens, for 'equality of opportunity' in enjoying the services that the state offers to its citizens is crucial to genuine democracy. Be it education, health care or other public utilities, every citizen must have the right to access these essential services. It is only when an individual enjoys all the three sets of rights that citizenship assumes significance.

Why a Feminist Perspective?

Against this backdrop it is now pertinent to raise a few fundamental questions relating to the need for a feminist discourse on citizenship. One may well ask: When we claim that citizenship ensures 'equality of opportunity' and 'equality before law', where is the need to look at it from a feminist angle? In a democratic society men and women are equal and the very purpose of conferring citizenship is to reject all forms of inequality, including gender inequality. Yes, in theory men and women are equal, but in reality women continue to experience a sense of deprivation because of the inbuilt notions of patriarchy and male hegemony that

characterize political and social ideologies. The sexes do not become equal in real life by merely claiming that as citizens men and women enjoy equal rights. Social systems are so sexually ordered that mere conferment of rights does not automatically eliminate gender-based prejudices and practices. Citizenship as it is practised has not been able to break the social and political barriers created by gender.

Women and the Law

According to the Indian constitution all citizens are equal before law. An entire body of legislation has been created to safeguard women's rights. However, offences against women are continuously on the rise. In spite of the law prescribing hard punitive action for violators, how many are actually punished for their involvement in such heinous crimes as dowry deaths or rape? Time and again one hears of the increasing incidence of atrocities against women, and yet most offenders get away without even being booked for the offence. In reality, how many women actually enjoy the right to live with dignity? In their own homes they are being battered and bruised. For the past eight years there has been a demand to enact a law treating violence against women as a punishable offence, but it is lying in cold storage in the Parliament because of the apathy of the citizens' elected representatives.

In a social set-up where the family is considered a private empire and a man its monarch, women have been bearing the brunt of social oppression for centuries. A male 'has the right' to domination over his wife, which could even go to the extent of physically abusing her. The enactment of the Domestic Violence Prevention Bill has been stalled because some of our parliamentarians want the law to make a distinction between 'occasional wife-batterers'

and 'habitual wife-batterers'! The administration of the legal system is heavily biased against women who are almost always being advised to make compromises for the sake of family honour. When the dual standards that characterize our society hold the law enforcement system so firmly in their grip, leave alone the question of enlightened citizenship, women cannot even claim to enjoy the rights of citizenship. It is little wonder that feminists have raised their voice against the treatment of women as 'second-class citizens'.

Political Rights of Women

Who says that women in India do not have political rights? But these rights seem to be confined only to the freedom to vote in elections. True, Indian women did not have to wage a long-drawn battle for securing franchise, as their sisters had to in many other parts of the world. But political right is not limited to casting one's vote alone. Participation in governance means that women must also have the freedom to decide whether they want to contest elections. Theoretically speaking, there is no obstacle to women filing their nominations, but look at what is happening in reality. A woman candidate was set ablaze in Bihar because she went ahead with her plans of contesting the elections in spite of opposition from her male opponents! The Women's Reservation Bill that proposes to give 33% reservation for women in state assemblies and the Parliament has still not seen the light of day because our politicians are raising one hurdle after another in the way. When the political mindset is caught in the grip of a gender stereotype that says women cannot rule but are only fit to be ruled, can we create an environment that enables women to live and function as enlightened citizens?

The constitution of India conferred on women the right to equality of opportunity as citizens of the country. It went a step further and removed all hurdles to their emancipation when it declared that there should not be any

discrimination on the basis of sex in accessing opportunities. But the reality is different. Leave alone the right to equal opportunity, many female infants in this country do not even have the right to be born! Through sex-determination tests millions of female foetuses are aborted. Female infanticide, which is nothing short of murder, flourishes unabated in many parts of India. Domestic violence accounts for 30% of the cases of violence against women. No wonder there is a gradual decline in the number of women in the country's population. In spite of the enactment of many policies and programmes aimed at their emancipation, a large number of women are still confined to their homes and hearths. Though there are no legal hurdles to their full-fledged participation in the country's socio-economic and political life, deep-seated gender prejudices and restrictive social taboos obstruct their well-being. All this leaves us wondering whether women are enlightened citizens or an endangered group!

True Emancipation

If the concept of enlightened citizenship has to become a reality for women, an ennobling environment in which they can lead a life of dignity must first be created. True emancipation takes place only when human beings have the freedom of choice. The last five years have seen the emergence of the concept of empowerment in a big way, but what meaning does this concept have in the life of a woman if she does not have the freedom to take decisions relating to her life? For that matter, how many women are even aware of their rights as citizens? The first task in the path of making women enlightened citizens is to create in them an awareness of their rights. The second and more important step is to ensure that they enjoy the rights conferred on them in the true sense of the term. It is equally important that women must take an active part in governance at all levels. Establishing a gender-just social order is the basis of enlightened citizenship, for inequality and enlightenment cannot coexist.

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Enlightened Citizenship: A Woman's View

BARSHA NAG BHOWMICK

We live in changing times. Significant political and economic developments and innovations in the field of communication technology towards the end of the twentieth century have left a deep impact on us. Globalization has given a new dimension to the economy, has altered the power and functions of the nation state and created a global village. These events have provoked a debate on democracy and the nation state, and also on enlightened citizenship—for both men and women.

The Evolution of Citizenship

Citizenship did not happen in a day. It came about gradually. New discoveries and developments brought about important changes in the life of primitive man. He gave up the wandering life. Families and groups learnt to live together at one place forming a village. The early villages grew up on the banks of rivers or in river valleys. There they built huts for themselves. The villages were small and the huts clustered together. The entire family slept together in a single-room hut.

Once primitive man settled down to live together with others in a village, he could not do as he pleased. It became necessary to frame some rules so that everyone could live peacefully. These rules were enforced by the elders of the village. The old people were considered to be the wise men of the community and entrusted with the responsibility of settling differences among the members. But sometimes the strongest man of the community was given this charge. People obeyed them and thus petty disputes were avoided.

With the advent of the modern age, citizenship came to mean membership in a political community (originally a city but now usu-

ally a state), and carries with it the right to political participation. It is largely coterminous with nationality, although it is possible to have a nationality without being a citizen (that is, one can legally be a subject of a state and entitled to its protection without having rights of political participation in it). It is also possible to have political rights without being the citizen of a state (for example, a citizen of a Commonwealth country resident in the United Kingdom is entitled to full political rights).

Citizenship also often implies working towards the betterment of the community one lives in through social participation and volunteer work aimed at improving life for all citizens. To this end, some schools in England and Wales give citizenship lessons—a variant of Personal and Social Education.

Rights of the Citizen

Citizenship is interrelated with rights. A right is the power or privilege to which one is justly entitled, or a thing to which one has a just claim. Many different types of rights have been described. Many of these terms describe overlapping concepts, and are often used interchangeably: Human rights refer to the concept of human beings as having certain universal rights, or status, regardless of the legal jurisdiction or other localizing factors such as ethnicity and nationality. Inalienable rights (or unalienable rights) refers to a set of absolute rights that are supposedly endowed by God and not by any human power, and are not capable of being repudiated or transferred to another power. The phrase is most famously used in the United States' Declaration of Independence, where 'unalienable rights' are said to include 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. Natural rights exist as universal inherent ethical realities

permitting persons to do certain things. Natural rights are based on natural law. Civil rights refer to the privilege of personal liberty given to all citizens by law and the protection of the same. Contractual rights are those based on laws agreed upon between persons for whom those laws are valid.

There is an important distinction to be made between positive rights, which oblige others in some way, and negative rights, which free oneself from obligation or coercion. In most views of law, it is not generally considered necessary that a right should be understood by a holder of that right; thus rights may be agreed to on behalf of another—for instance, children's rights or the rights of people declared mentally incompetent to understand their rights. However, rights must be understood by somebody in order to have legal existence, so the understanding of rights is a social prerequisite for their existence. Therefore, educational opportunities within society have a close bearing upon the people's ability to erect adequate rights structures.

A right is a sort of freedom to do or possess something, or an object of justice. In fact, one of the definitions of justice is the obligation that the legal system has towards the individual or a community with regard to the granting of respect to, or execution of, his/her/its rights, ordinarily with no need of an explicit claim. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book Five) claims that there is a large difference between written (generalized) justice and what is actually right for the (specific) individual.

Rights can be divided into individual rights, held by citizens as individuals (or corporations) recognized by the legal system, and collective rights, held by a group or subgroup of citizens who have a certain common characteristic. In some cases there can be an amount of tension between individual and collective rights, while in other cases the view of collective and individual rights held by one group can come into sharp and bitter conflict with that held by another. For instance compare 'Mani-

fest Destiny' with 'Trail of Tears' in US history.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, however, explains citizenship thus:

In political and legal theory, citizenship refers to the rights and duties of the member of a nation-state or city. In some historical contexts, a citizen was any member of a city, that is urban, and which was relatively immune from the demands of a monarch of state. In classical Greece, citizenship was limited to free men, who had a right to participate in political debate because they contributed, often through military service, to the direct support of the city-state.

Social Responsibility of Citizens

A couple of years back President Abdul Kalam, stressed the need for enlightened citizenship through which people undertook 'service to humanity as service to God'. He said this could happen when all devotees pledged themselves to concrete acts of service. The vows suggested by the President include: educating five children or playing a crucial role in activating one pond in one's neighbourhood or nearby village; removing enmity within one's family and withdrawing court cases; planting five fruit-bearing trees; not succumbing to the temptation of addictive substances; and treating male and female children equally. 'Even if ten per cent of the devotees take up any one of these vows, I am sure there will be a tremendous impact on society', Dr Kalam said.

But in reality social organizations, corporate bodies and even the mass media have moved away from the positive expectations of civil society. Globalization and economic liberalization have further contributed to the deteriorating, negative attitude of corporate bodies towards society. Global competition and the profit motive have made the media forget its social responsibility. Money rules over morals. The media is no more interested in developing citizenship or providing a public sphere for dialogue and interaction among citizens. Instead, it is busy transforming citizens into spectators by offering them entertainment in the name of

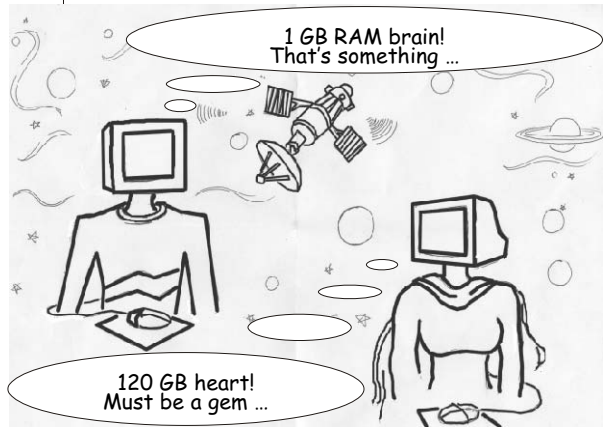
education, knowledge and information. Our children are born into homes in which the dominant storytellers are not those who have something to tell but a small group of global conglomerates that have something to sell. Channels multiply but communication technologies and the media converge and merge in the whirlpool of consumerism.

Advertizing should be concerned with the marketing of social ideas, such as public-health campaigns to reduce smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse and overeating; drives to promote environment protection, clean air and wildlife conservation; and other campaigns such as family planning, human rights and racial equality. This area of advertizing is called social marketing, and it includes the creation and implementation of programmes seeking to increase the acceptability of a social idea, cause or practice for the all-round development of society. For example, the Advertising Council of America has developed dozens of social-advertising campaigns including Smokey the Bear, Keep America Beautiful, Join the Peace Corps, Buy Bonds, Go to College, Say No to Drugs and so on. This social marketing involves much more than just advertising; it is an attempt to make the earth a better place to live in and help people become 'enlightened citizens'.

Moreover, to become enlightened citizens we should take institutions like marriage more seriously. Recently, on behalf of my uncle, I posted my cousin's profile on the Internet for a suitable match. In no time my uncle received an e-mail from a potential groom: 'Hi, I can't negotiate with u, but with my future expected life partner directly ... I'm an independent guy and my partner should b independent. I don't give importance to religion, age or marital status. I'm very open-minded, I can't accept a partner who's very orthodox by nature. My partner should b smart, sober, a go-getter, educated, very friendly by nature and accepts life as it comes to her ... she'll not mind

even if our friendship doesn't culminate into marriage ... if ur daughter finds me suitable then request her to shoot mails.'

So are today's youngsters becoming a tad too smart when it comes to marriage? Till a few years ago, arranged marriages were the regular thing in urban India. They were conducted either through matrimonial columns in newspapers or through marriage brokers and common friends. But that was in the hoary twentieth century, when the e-era had not unleashed its charms on us. However, the Internet and potential marital tie-ups do not always mix. A few married friends of mine visited some chat rooms and ended up having what can only be called 'online extra-marital affairs'. Now their family life is on the rocks.



The Internet chat room has its own dynamics, unknown to the innocent. There people can mask their age, be married or single, or pretty much whatever they want to be. First you go to a chat room to talk; then you want to meet; and one thing leads to another. There are youngsters getting involved with middle-aged partners. Of course there might be a couple or two who do end up getting married through the Net and live happily ever after. But my question is, how can we fall in love with someone we have not even met? And when we meet a person through the Internet, how do we ensure that the person on the other side is being 'e-faithful'? Then whither good or enlightened citizenship?

Women: Instinctively Enlightened Citizens

Finally, as a woman of the twenty-first century, I must mention that women are much deprived of their citizenship rights, though by nature they are instinctively more enlightened than men, for sharing, caring, and social concern come naturally to women. The acceptance of gender equality in the constitution of independent India provided women with a basis for a new identity as full citizens of the republic, and a source of their right to equality, dignity and justice in all spheres of life. It may be mentioned that Swami Vivekananda, in his lecture at Cambridge on 17 December 1894, said:

Women in statesmanship, managing territories, governing countries, even making war, have proved themselves equal to men—if not superior. In India I have no doubt of that. Whenever they have had the opportunity, they have proved that they have as much ability as men, with this advantage—that they seldom degenerate. They keep to the moral standard, which is innate in their nature. And thus as governors and rulers of their state, they prove—at least in India—far superior to men.

It is quite natural for a woman to nurse her children, to care for them in their infancy, and be attached to her home. Being physically less muscular than man, it is also natural that she leads a more retiring, domestic life. But even then women should be treated in the same class with men as enlightened citizens because, as mentioned earlier, they are 'instinctively enlightened'.

Enlightened citizens, both men and women, understand that they have a responsibility towards the community, environment and law. For instance, they may actively instil in children the virtue of good citizenship by ex-

plaining the difference between good and bad examples, and by acting as worthy role models. But there is not an iota of doubt that globally enlightened citizens are indeed very few. The reason is an overall lack of concern and adequate education. Generally, individuals are not aware of their rights and obligations as citizens. Very often people do not cultivate or develop a sense of belonging to the society they live in.

'I am a citizen not of Athens or Greece but of the world', said Socrates. Such a proud claim is rare indeed and emanates only from a noble soul. And we get a homely and well-meaning description of a world citizen from Francis Bacon: 'If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world.'

If 'will, not force' is the basis of the state then the governance of that state has to be fair and just. Abraham Lincoln said in a speech in 1863: 'This nation (USA) shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth.' Nearly eighty years after Lincoln, we heard a speech (1941) from another US president, Franklin D Roosevelt, making freedom more comprehensive by dissecting it into four parts: (1) Freedom of speech and expression everywhere in the world; (2) Freedom of every person to worship God in his own way everywhere in the world; (3) Freedom from want everywhere in the world; and (4) Freedom from fear anywhere in the world. If the Orwellian observation—'All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others'—be true, then certainly we have spent our time mostly forging backwards. There are not any brave causes to fight for. We are walking safely in the middle while we should have been moving fast forward towards the future. ~

The capacity to overlook personal convenience in favour of public interest is the essence of all social discipline. ... The attitude: I must have everything, I do not care what happens to others, is a childish attitude, not good even in children, but positively harmful in adults. ... What is the psychology of all such people? ... They all exhibit, what in the Indian social context can be called, the *feudal son-in-law mentality*! It is a mentality that demands this and demands that, but is responsible for nothing!

—*Enlightened Citizenship and Our Democracy*, 94-6

Enlightened Women in Rural India

SHRUBA MUKHOPADHYAY

As they aptly say, enlightenment and empowerment come from within. Women from dusty and remote villages of Gujarat, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh have not only preached it, but they have also practised it to show that by positive spirit, grit and determination parched lands can be made green, dry ponds can be filled up with water—and dignity can be restored to a life of drudgery.

Welcome to the world of action, where people believe in doing ‘small’ things to achieve not-so-small goals.

Repairing Handpumps in Rajkot

Repairing a handpump may be an insignificant job for a city-dweller, but when village women do it so that their loved ones can have safe drinking water, it becomes laudable. That a tradition-bound woman in rural Gujarat can transform herself into a handpump mechanic is hard to imagine, but with a positive attitude and courage she has indeed assumed this role.

The biggest example of this change is Kantaben, a mother of two in Somalpur village of Rajkot district. At first glance, she looks like any other village woman. But as you see her working with pipes and clamps, nuts and bolts, you realize that her new job has not only ensured safe drinking water for her drought-prone village, it has also brought dignity to her life.

Kantaben is not an exception. Over the years, as many as fifty women have got themselves trained in this job. ‘Since there were only two mobile handpump-repairing units and fetching water was our responsibility, we used to have a tough time in summer’, says Ramaben, another mechanic. ‘Sometimes it used to take as long as nine months to get a pump repaired and even our children had to trudge five

kilometres to fetch water. Moreover, it required a lot of paper work to convince the district administration that the pump had to be repaired, before the repair vans came to the village.’

The first and the most difficult challenge for the volunteers of the Mahila Samakhya Programme, who provided training to the women, was convincing the menfolk to send their wives and daughters to their training classes. The men had no problem with letting their women walk far to fetch water, but all hell broke loose when they were requested to allow them to attend the training programme. They did not like the idea of women sitting in the open.

Initially, even the women were nervous about their new vocation. ‘How could we learn and remember the names of the spare parts when we did not know English? We were afraid that the entire village would make fun of us if we failed’, says Savitriben.

To begin with, they decided to contribute to the programme by making posters, coining slogans and writing songs about water, handpumps and their repair. This led to the formation of a Pani Samiti (water committee) comprising the sarpanch, three women handpump users, members of the government Jal Board and local schoolteachers. Gradually, workshops were held where the women were provided both theoretical and practical training. The problem of remembering names of spare parts was solved by the trainees themselves. They were named according to their shapes. For example, a tool that looked like a cat’s face was named *billipanu* and the one that resembled a dog’s face was *kuttapanu*, while another round-shaped implement became *chapati*. Perhaps the English monkey wrench too has a similar origin! It did not take long for the women to learn account-keeping and the procedures for sum-

moning repair vans and applying for tool kits.

Soon, a battery of trained repairwomen was ready to take on the task of overhauling handpumps in adjoining villages. It was left to the Pani Samiti of every village to decide which villages would be covered by the mechanics and what they would be paid for their work.

'It was a red-letter day in my life when our team went to Baldoi village to fix a pump', beams 65-year-old Motiben. 'We were given a hero's welcome as we entered the village. And when water gushed out of the pump, all of us started dancing and singing as if we had won a major victory.' The women perhaps did not realize it then, but this 'victory' was to impact their social and family lives in a big way. 'We are no longer taken for granted by our menfolk, because we can do what they cannot', says Gulabiben.

Even as the mechanics bask in their newfound glory, some women in the district want to move ahead and launch another programme. Subhadraben, a secondary-school student of Vadla village, wants to work on projects to replenish groundwater levels. 'In summer the water level goes down and the pumps dry up', she says. 'Our technical knowledge is of no use then. We need to think of something that will offer a permanent solution to the water problem.'

With this kind of thinking spreading among rural women, today's handpump mechanics may well become tomorrow's watershed architects.

Combating Drought in Kalahandi

'Where is drought?' asks Kanti Majhi triumphantly as she gazes at her green field. She has reason to be proud. Going up a dusty village road as it winds along the hilly terrain in central Kalahandi in Orissa, one gets to see only parched fields, dry ponds and deserted houses. But Majhipara village in the Artal gram panchayat is an oasis, where the Kondh tribal women have dared nature.

Since almost all able-bodied men have migrated to Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan or Maharashtra in search of jobs, these women have

taken up the task of cultivation and forest protection in this drought-prone area. Motivated by the need to feed their children, about twenty women of this village organized themselves into small self-help groups and took up cultivation. 'Now it has become a matter of self-reliance for us—and the sheer joy of achieving something on our own!' exclaims Kanti Majhi.

While a local non-governmental organization provided the seeds, Kanti and her team prepared the fields for sowing and dug wells for irrigation. 'It was a difficult decision for us to start harvesting because we did not have any previous experience', says Banitadei. 'We used to help our menfolk in sowing seeds and transplanting paddy, but we did not have any idea about seeds, bio-fertilizers or the season and type of soil suited for different crops', she adds.

As the land had not been cultivated before, it took the team one month to weed it and prepare the soil for growing vegetables like spinach, lady's finger and gourd. Then Banitadei,



Fighting drought in Kalahandi

along with two others, chalked out a plan for irrigating their two acres of land. They dug four seven-foot-deep wells at four corners of the field. A length of wood about twelve feet long was placed across the mouth of each well. Two wooden posts were fixed to support a bamboo pole, which could be used to lift a bucket. 'The total cost came to about Rs 150. All of us contributed', says Kanti, adding that when the wooden piece or bamboo pole wore out they were used for fuel. The women have also

worked out a 'duty chart' to record the amount of water they use to cultivate the fields. Each five-member group notes down the quantity of water used by it, making it easier for the next group to know what has been done before it takes over.

The land is held under common ownership and all the members have an equal share in the crops or the proceeds from their sale. Though it will be a few months before they reap their first harvest, they have already worked out their marketing strategies. They plan to go out in small groups to try their luck in local village markets as well as in the main block market. A certain percentage of the proceeds will be deposited in their thrift fund, which has a corpus amount of Rs 1,000. With a monthly subscription of Rs 10, the thrift fund is the only source of ready credit at nominal interest rates in case of illness, marriage or death. It is also used to pay wages to forest-protection groups.

Though the forest surrounding the village is the main source of honey, bamboo and other products, it is also a major cause of conflict with the neighbouring villages. So the women of Majhipara have organized a patrol party by inducting teenagers to protect forest resources. 'We oppose the felling of trees and only gather dry wood for our purposes', says Lata, the chief of the patrol party. 'We know forest resources are limited and should be judiciously used.' The women patrol the approach roads to the forest, check passing bullock carts and some-

times even face the wrath of the police. 'But we can handle such situations better than men because we can keep our cool', says Lata, who claims that women in her village are now more confident and assertive.

Migration of menfolk in search of work is not a new phenomenon in Kalahandi and it is a regular feature in Majhipara. Earlier, the women who stayed back had little choice but to work as agricultural labourers. Heavily exploited, they earned as little as Rs 20 a day, as against the minimum daily wage of Rs 40 approved by the government. The recurrent droughts made things even worse. Left to fend for themselves and their children, these women hit upon the idea of producing their own food and protecting their resources. 'We are now planning to visit the district headquarters at Bhawanipatna to request the officials to give us some training. After all, it is a question of our survival', says Kanti.

Survive they will, but they will come out of it stronger, and, most importantly, liberated.

Control of Agriculture in Saharanpur

Women carrying spades, sickles and baskets and making a beeline for the fields early in the morning is a common sight in any Indian village. But women testing the quality of the soil and selecting irrigation sites can only be seen in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

Organized into small self-help groups of fifteen members each, women from backward communities in three blocks—Rampur, Nagal and Baliakheri—select and plough the land, decide what crops to grow and sell the harvest in the district market directly, without going through middlemen. Elaborating on the challenges faced by them, Rajbati of Lakhoor village in Rampur says, 'We were given plots that were unfit for cultivation, were located far away from the village and did not have any water source nearby.'

Procuring land was also a major problem for the women of Buddhakhhera village. Since these women do not have patta, or title deeds,



The Majhipara forest patrol

they have to take land on rent. 'Tending the soil is like nurturing our own children. With our hard work and dedication, we not only reap good harvests, but also improve the fertility of the land', says Sanjog Devi. But once the quality of the land is enhanced, the landlord refuses to rent it out to the women any more and starts cultivating it himself. As a result, these women have to move to another piece of land and work hard on it.

After the plot is selected, the women sit down to decide what to grow and chalk out a duty chart making two members responsible for one crop. 'We usually meet at 9 p.m. when all our household chores are over', Sanjog Devi says. Crops are selected on the basis of market survey done by the women themselves.

In spite of the fall in prices of agricultural produce, these women enjoy a good profit margin, thanks to their zero-cost labour. They also try to keep expenditure on fertilizers low by preparing bio-composts in their homes. 'Instead of angrezi pesticides, we use cow dung, cow urine, neem and salt for protecting our crops', says Sulekha. The only major expenditure that the women have to incur apart from land rent is the hire charges paid for tractors. 'Not only do we have to shell out Rs 70 per bigha, we also have to engage a man for the job. It is a blot on us!' Sulekha says. She wants to take up the job herself from the next season.



Cultivating sunflower in Saharanpur

Proceeds from the sale of the harvest are kept in the bank and are also used for giving soft loans to local people in times of emergency.

Financial independence apart, this project has also brought social recognition for the women, who were earlier scoffed at as 'shameless women trying to imitate men'. The direct result of this recognition and standing in village society is that the issues raised by these women are considered and acted upon immediately. Thus today, thanks to these women, child marriage and selling of girls have been greatly curtailed, while they are still fighting alcoholism and wife-beating.

As for these women, they know that they have a long way to go. But their courage to fight back and their strong yearning for a life of dignity will sustain their struggle. ~

Service as Social Responsibility

Midway between the Khardaha and Sodepur railway stations of suburban Kolkata is a desolate stretch which is a favourite haunt for suicides. Every year several cases of death on the tracks are reported from this area. When the relatives of a suicide reach the site they are very likely to find two elderly women, Nilima Chakraborty and her sister, standing guard to prevent mutilation of the body by stray animals. Nilima will also help the grieving relatives fulfil all formalities with the police and arrange for removal of the corpse.

This task the women have voluntarily undertaken, as their hut happens to be the nearest human habitation. Often they have to keep awake all night before rushing to their workplace—a good distance away—the next morning. But they do not mind. Long back Nilima had lost her husband in a rail accident. Inordinate delay in recovering the body had resulted in its disfiguration beyond recognition. Nilima does not want this to happen to anyone else. She gives one the impression that in this act of service she is only fulfilling a social responsibility.

Education for Enlightenment

DR K KULANDAIVEL

The Wisdom of Ancient India

India is an ancient land. Its culture and civilization stretches back to five thousand years or more. People have lived here peacefully and happily pursuing their goals of life. They had a clear, though limited, knowledge of the world outside and a deep understanding of their own inner nature. They were content with whatever they had and learnt to live in harmony with external nature whether they were educated or not, whether they had wealth or were living in poverty, whether they had power or were ordinary people. They were enlightened about the purpose of life and they lived peacefully realizing that purpose. They understood long ago that human peace and happiness depends not on the wealth they possess, or the power they wield, or the scholarship they have acquired, but by living a life of renunciation and having the awareness that they are part of the entire universe and that all constitute one family, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*.

Swami Vivekananda brings this out very clearly in his immortal works. He said:

If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya Bhumi* ... the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality—it is India.¹

... the Indian race never stood for wealth. Although they acquired immense wealth, perhaps more than any other nation ever acquired, yet the nation did not stand for wealth. It was a powerful race for ages, yet we find that that nation never stood for power, never went out of the country to conquer. Quite content within their own boundaries, they never fought anybody. The Indian nation never stood for imperial glory. Wealth and power, then, were not the ideals of the race (8.74).

By their observation and study of external nature, our people gave to the world several sciences and arts. They understood the natural world and the laws governing it and applied that knowledge to everyday life. They also concentrated on the inner nature of the human being, the working of the human mind and the methods of controlling it. They realized the inner Self, the Atman, and understood that all are one Atman. They were conscious that underneath the outer multiplicity and diversity there runs a thread of unity that connects us all. This knowledge gave them a mastery over the outer and inner worlds, and they lived in peace with the outside world and with their inner self.

The Ancient Indian System of Education

This wisdom and experience had to be passed on to posterity. For this an educational system was devised. Children and youths were sent to learned gurus, who introduced them to the world of wisdom and experience. The guru-shishya relationship and the gurukula system of schooling were the hallmarks of education in ancient India. Science, philosophy and spirituality were the content of education. Our Upanishads and epics give an account of how the system worked and how the students went out after completing their education as enlightened men and women. The ancient universities of Nalanda and Takshashila, and the famous seats of learning in Kanchi and Pataliputra, we learn, attracted a large number of students from all over the country and abroad.

Listening to the teachings of the gurus, concentrating on them, and meditation were the methods of learning adopted by the students. In fact, the intuitive insights obtained by meditation were held to be a very important source of knowledge. Although this kind of en-

lightened knowledge was obtained in large measure by those who studied in the gurukulas, even ordinary people who did not have the benefit of attending such schools were penetrated by its influence. There was a basic faith in the system and even the uneducated people understood the spirit behind it and accepted it fully.

In the course of the next several centuries marked changes took place in India. Many races invaded the land, established their rule and tried to propagate their religion and culture. The impact of these cultures on India changed the ways of life of many people, especially those who worked under them or sought their favour. But the vast majority of the country's population, who lived in rural areas, were largely unaffected and continued to follow the faith of their ancestors with only some minor changes in their lifestyle.

The Present State of Education in India

India today is different from what it was in ancient times. It is one integrated country with people of different religions, languages, cultures and ways of living. In the fifty years since independence we have been seeing several changes in our country. From an agrarian economy India is fast becoming an industrial economy. There is a steady growth of urban population. There is an awakening among the people both in urban and rural areas to get educated; they have realized that education alone can provide them a better standard of life. The number of schools, colleges, universities and technical institutions are on the increase and lakhs and lakhs of students are flocking to them. The ambition of every Indian youth today is to get educated, find a job in the business, industrial or service sectors and settle down well.

Our ancient system of education has given way to the system that was introduced by the British rulers to produce clerks and officers they needed for administration. Until very recently, the main subjects taught were English, local languages, mathematics, and physical and social sciences. And even now emphasis is only on

the knowledge content, on which examinations are conducted. All other useful knowledge areas and skills are vastly neglected. Philosophy, fine arts and health sciences do not find a place in the curriculum, leave alone spiritual knowledge. So students have no opportunity to know about their faith, culture and values. The knowledge they gain is mainly bookish and is not backed by practical experience. This is the reason why the number of educated but unemployed youths is increasing year after year.

Several education commissions were appointed after independence to review the educational system in the country and suggest suitable modifications so as to make education a useful tool for national development. If education cannot provide employment opportunities to the youth it can hardly be meaningful. But none of the commissions have suggested basic changes in the system. They suggested only cosmetic changes in a few areas and some of them have been implemented. But many major requirements, such as inculcation of the patriotic spirit, nurturing moral and spiritual values, making the youth fit for employment, cultivation of the scientific attitude to life and its problems, development of the capacity for critical thinking, and providing challenging programmes for the youth for bringing out the best in them, are still to be fulfilled.

In the recent past several technical institutions and colleges have been started which teach science and technology. The number of scientists and technologists in the country is on the rise. Our growth in the field of computer science and information technology has been phenomenal. We proudly proclaim that one-third of the world's scientific manpower is in India. Our youth are much in demand in different parts of the world. Nearly fifty per cent of Silicon Valley scientists are Indians. On the industrial side, we are manufacturing various kinds of machinery and transport vehicles in large numbers and exporting them. Our software exports have increased to thousands of crores of rupees. Our forex reserve is growing.

Where Are We Headed?

However, do all these developments and achievements give us enlightenment and happiness? Do people in the developed countries who have lots of money and all the amenities of a comfortable life lead enlightened, peaceful, happy lives? We do not get a positive reply to this. While we see wealth and comfort on one side, we see also hatred, violence, misery and suffering on the other side. We see the lack of love and affection in families, the separations and divorces of spouses and the helplessness of children. We also see how innocent people are put to all kinds of suffering. For the sake of wealth and power people are ready to go to the extent of eliminating their opponents and rivals. We see highly educated people lacking in wisdom. Many of them lead miserable lives. Having fallen prey to bad habits, they neglect their physical health and consequently suffer from severe health problems. They worry too much and end up with mental disorders. Many even commit suicide. Our own country is no exception. The culture of selfishness and violence is fast spreading in India too, thanks to modern media and communications facilities.

Why are these things taking place? Is human nature really turning bad? Have we lost human dignity? Are we descending to subhuman levels? The present happenings in the world arouse such questions in the minds of all thinking people.

Essentially, human nature as we see it now is just the same as it was in the past. We are all endowed with good natures and a number of abilities at birth. Children have the same noble qualities today as they had in the past. But the difference lies in their upbringing, in their education and in the company they are exposed to. Even today proper education and environment bring out the best of human nature. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man' (4.358). But unfortunately, our materialistic education and sectarian religious views do little

to bring out the perfection and divinity that are hidden in us. Wherever good environment, proper education and spiritual atmosphere are provided by society, or acquired by people by dint of their own efforts, we see noble characters emerging. How else can we explain the presence of Vivekanandas, Gandhis and Teresas among us. So it is necessary that we give proper education to our children and youth so that they become enlightened citizens and make the world a peaceful and happy place.

Swami Vivekananda insisted:

Education, education, and education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got. Through education comes faith in one's own Self, and through faith in one's own Self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them ... (4.483).

How can there be any progress of the country without the spread of education, the dawning of knowledge? (6.489).

The Education We Need

What type of education will provide this enlightenment? What are the components of such an education? According to Swamiji, 'The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education' (4.490). He wanted a man-making education 'by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet' (5.342).

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century has in its report to the UNESCO pointed out:

At the dawn of a new century, the prospect of which evokes both anguish and hope, it is essential that all people with a sense of responsibility turn their attention to both the aims and means of education. It is the view of the Commission that, while education is an ongoing process of improving knowledge and skills, it is also—perhaps primarily—an exceptional means of bring-

ing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations.

Today we Indians are living in a democracy where all people are equal and have equal right to development. Education must be equally available to all, and it should be one that fits them to the task of earning their own livelihood, by giving them access to the world of knowledge and by bringing out the best talents that are hidden in them. It should also generate in them a feeling of universal love.

Learning Occupational Skills: Every child must be taught some craft or occupation needed for earning his livelihood. While doing that the child must also be given the best education that will help him understand nature and its secrets. He must also be educated about the social world—the nature of the society he lives in, the laws that guide it, and the culture it has evolved. This was exactly what Gandhiji wanted to bring about through his revolutionary system of Basic Education in the 1940s. But lack of proper understanding of the implications of the scheme and an unwillingness to change on the part of its implementers led to its neglect and ultimate disappearance.

Swamiji wanted that education should also be provided to people who worked all day long in the fields, after their working hours. They may not be able to come to schools, but education must reach them. He said:

If the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere. How? You have seen my brethren. Now I can get hundreds of such [all-renouncing sannyasins], all over India, unselfish, good, and educated. Let these men go from village to village bringing not only religion to the door of everyone but also education' (8.308).

So we need an education that will train every child in some job useful to society. Thus, with the skill they acquire, they will be able to settle down in some occupation and earn their living, instead of being drags on society living

on others people's income. This will give them dignity and the confidence to face life. Our present technical and professional institutions are indeed providing their students such skills, but their practical content needs to be improved to enable the students to meet the ever-increasing demands of the new scientifically and technologically revolutionized workplaces, be they business houses or service institutions.

Cultivating Useful Knowledge: We are living in a knowledge society. There is tremendous explosion of knowledge in all spheres of life. So it is essential to learn such knowledge as will help us understand the surrounding society and live in harmony with it. Schools, colleges and universities provide such knowledge not only to those who attend them, but also to those who live in remote areas and are not able to attend regular classes, through distance education. The mass media too is an effective channel for the dissemination of knowledge. Online education is yet another option; those who have access to it can learn without moving out of their homes. All these facilities must be utilized by young men and women, and they must try to acquire as much useful knowledge as possible.

However, education need not be restricted to the youth alone. People at all ages can learn. Anybody who wants to improve his professional skills, whatever be his age, must have access to the necessary knowledge so that he can progress further. Whoever wants to better his own life must be able to get the knowledge necessary for solving his problems. Such lifelong education is a must and it must be made available to all people.

Fostering a Plural Attitude: Thanks to the modern revolution in communications, people are coming closer than ever to each other and we are now living in a global village. People of different languages, beliefs, religious faiths, political convictions and ways of life have come to live cheek by jowl, so to say. So there is an urgent need to understand the differences in the right spirit, accept them and respect them. We must know that everyone has a right to his way

of life. Dogmatism and bigotry have no place in today's world. Lack of sympathy, understanding and consideration have been the cause of most of our social, national and international problems. Education must instil these qualities in our children and the media must educate the people on these issues. This is the way to bring about lasting harmony, peace and happiness.

Perceiving Spiritual Unity: All our scriptures teach that everything in the world originates in God and belongs to God. We are all the same Atman in different forms, and so we are all really one. This fact that we all belong to one big family—*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*—must be understood and emotionally felt by everyone. Then the tendency to injure others will vanish, for in harming others we harm ourselves. Modern science, particularly quantum physics, also teaches the same thing. We are not independent of other things and beings around us. Each solid particle in the universe, including our bodies, are bundles of energy vibrating in an immense void. Every cell in our body is connected to other cells in other bodies; there is a

constant transfer of energy from one body to another. Each cell derives energy from and gives its energy to other cells. So the difference between bodies is only apparent. We are all bundles of cells vibrating with the energy that is moving fast from one body to another. So from the standpoint of higher science also the difference between individuals vanishes. We are all actually one. Thus the spiritual concept that we are one Atman and the scientific concept that we are one mass of energy-loaded cells merge.

Once we realize this, all differences vanish. This is the highest enlightenment that we can acquire. Education must help us get this enlightenment. When this is achieved, the world will be a place of peace and happiness, a veritable *rama-rajya*, or Kingdom of God. It is the duty of education and educators to help us attain this. ~

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An Enlightened Educator

Last year Ramakrishna Ashrama, Balurghat, West Bengal, felicitated Sri Swapan Adhikari, a local Rickshaw puller, for his remarkable commitment to promotion of education. Every year, for the last twelve years, Swapan has single-handedly been arranging for distribution of books and writing materials to the poor students of the town. On 3 June 2005, two hundred poor students received material worth Rs 40,000 in the presence of the district magistrate and the district social welfare officer.

Twelve years back Swapan had accidentally discovered an envelope containing Rs 4,300 while cleaning his rickshaw. Despite his best efforts (including reporting to the police and the panchayat), he could not trace the owner. So he decided to purchase some books for poor children with the money. The joy on the children's faces deeply touched Swapan's heart. He himself had studied only up to Class IV, but he thought that if he could help poor children get educated, they could stand on their own feet and come out of their poverty. That was the beginning of his mission. Each day, once he has earned the fifty-odd rupees that he says is enough for his three-member family, he keeps the rest of the day's earnings aside for his project. At the end of the year he visits the local schools to get a list of children who need financial help. He then spends long hours at the collector's office to get him to participate in the distribution programme, as it involves many children.

Swapan and his family have voluntarily embraced frugal living so that they could bring joy to numerous others. On being felicitated at the Ashrama, he requested the gathering to bless him that his service could continue right up to his death. In helping others get their education, Swapan has shown what true education is.

Enlightened Administration

R K TRIVEDI

Our Democracy

Governance is the art of administering the affairs of the state through the legislative, executive and judicial wings, and other institutions within the overall ideological framework of the accepted political system, as enshrined in the constitution of the country. The preamble of our constitution provides the essence of the nation's ideological foundation. It reads as follows:

We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and opportunity, and to promote among them all fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual, and the unity and integrity of the Nation; in our Constituent Assembly, this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this constitution.

The entire philosophy underlying the above principles can be summarized in the twin concepts of democracy and welfare state. The constitution requires the administration of the country to be committed to these basic concepts in order to cater to the needs of the people of the country whom the administration is meant primarily to serve.

In the above context, we may examine whether the present health of our democratic state is sound enough for the practical realization of the ideals enumerated above. Gunnar Myrdal, the eminent statesman and historian, thought that our democracy lacks social discipline, and suffers from deficiency in respect for law, law enforcement and observance, and from collusion between officials who are responsible for implementing policies and programmes, leading to rampant corruption. In his view, the

realization of the democratic goal has been made difficult through failure to eradicate poverty, secure equality and develop a healthy party system. In addition to these drawbacks, I am inclined to draw pointed attention to the failure of our electoral system because of muscle power, money power, ministerial power and the latter-day developments of booth capturing and silent rigging in some states. Unfortunately the induction of the concept of 'Mandalization' has indirectly resulted in the creation of a casteist communal vote.

Abhijit Bhattacharji, a noted columnist, after experiencing first-hand polling in several states during general elections, wrote a series of articles in *The Pioneer* ending with the one titled 'Dark Alleys of Democracy'. He lamented: 'One wonders as to when we will have candidates—scholarly, politically alive, but at the same time balanced people—at the helm to navigate Indian political, economic and radical destiny? Should we not confront and combat the uneducated criminals and gangsters?' In spite of innumerable recommendations of different committees and the Election Commission, no major electoral reform has so far been undertaken to stem the downward slide of the entire electoral process.

There are, however, strong countervailing factors like an independent judiciary, free press and emerging grass-roots level democratic bodies like the panchayat which should ensure survival of the democratic spirit. Besides, as Winston Churchill said, 'democracy, as of now, is not the most ideal form of government but ... no better system has yet been evolved'. Even as we evolve into a real mature democracy, we should introspect and remedy the failings listed above and stem the rot. It appears to me that the first effective step should be to induct a civil

ethical content in the working of our democracy. As observed by Paul Appleby in *Morality and Administration in Democracy*, 'only informed and evolved citizens could help achieve the democratic goals of a society and government'.

The Enlightened Citizen

The late Swami Ranganathanandaji, one of the finest exponents of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of practical Vedanta, has in a brilliant exposition contained in his *Enlightened Citizenship and Our Democracy* stated that enlightened citizenship and electoral reorientation alone can strengthen our democracy. He felt that mere political trappings do not make for a perfect democracy unless people at large rise from their individual selves to the spiritual level of responsible citizenship. An enlightened citizen is one who moves out of the limited ego into the expansive experience of impersonal sympathy.

The duty of the government in respect of its citizens is to determine policies, carry on programmes in realization of those policies, and explain to and educate the citizens about those policies and programmes and about the problems that lie behind them. A beginning, therefore, has to be made from this first step to transform and elevate a mere individual to the level of an enlightened citizen. This alone will guarantee a real 'government of the people'.

Since we can no longer have the type of Greek city states like Athens and Sparta, we have to have a mechanism which guarantees a truly representative character of those elected. It may be necessary to examine whether the 'first past the post' system, which works exceedingly well in the UK with only two or three major political parties, should be tried here with a multiplicity of parties and hordes of candidates for every constituency. A truly representative candidate should be elected at least by a majority of votes polled, if not by a majority of the electorate. The current situation highlights the failure of the system. So far no central or state

government has been formed on the basis of a majority of votes polled and therefore a big question arises whether our elected representatives are true representatives of their constituencies. Obviously, the answer is a big no. The government would work 'for the people' only when those elected truly reflect the problems and aspirations of the majority. A government 'of the people, by the people and for the people' can come into sustainable existence only when some of the deficiencies indicated above are removed and the foundations of a sound democracy laid where the administration is guaranteed the wherewithal to deliver the goods in the true democratic spirit.

True, the world today recognizes that India has developed deep roots in democracy and that it has been able to see changes in government and make radical social and economic reforms without bloodshed. This is no mean achievement, but frankly, we need to introspect and make suitable changes where necessary to enable the existing democratic system to attain sustainability against individual and societal frailties through the induction of a *spiritual and ethical quotient*.

Welfare State Needs Spiritual Focus

A welfare state as distinct from a police state emphasizes social responsibility arising out of impersonal sympathy, and the administration graduates from merely regulatory functions to developmental functions for the establishment of a socio-economic and moral order. We can take pride in the fact that our national plans have been based on the principles of 'growth with social justice'. Today India is the fourth largest economy in the world with the third highest GDP. Significant steps have also been taken to improve the social and economic conditions of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and backward classes and backward minorities.

A lot more, however, needs to be done because thirty-five per cent of our population is still illiterate and twenty-eight per cent below

the poverty line. Two random incidents should be enough to indicate that the welfare goal is still far away. It was way back in 1959 when Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant asked the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes to ensure that the practice of carrying night soil on human heads be stopped within five years. Forty-seven years later, the terrible subhuman practice still continues. The problem has not been tackled politically, socially or economically, despite all the loud political noises. Take another example. There can be no greater indignity to humans than to see millions of people living in metropolitan cities in subnormal conditions in slums. Restoration of human dignity at all levels should be the central aim of all our administrative efforts; all of them must subserve the ideal of the welfare state.

Vivekananda's practical Vedanta alone guarantees the attainment of the welfare goals of equality and social justice. Swamiji thundered, 'Who serves Jiva, serves God indeed.' Further, he said, 'May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.' If the core of our administration is fired and inspired by such spiritual thoughts of unity, sympathy, brotherhood and sacrifice, then the government's vision of achieving the lofty ideals of a truly welfare state will become an actuality. A dose of spiritual nutrition is overdue. This is also what I mean when I say that the goals implicit in the preamble of our constitution for a buoyant democratic welfare state can be achieved only by inducting a spiritual content.

The preliminary canter above delineates the constitutional basis of the functioning of the country's administration. The responsibility of administering the country vests in the executive, which is accountable to an elected legislature. The executive, comprising the political as well as the permanent wings, is jointly re-

sponsible not only for carrying out the mandate of the constitution but also for implementing the policies, plans and programmes of the elected government.

The Moral Fibre of the Political Executive

To take the political executive first, I would refer to the great good fortune of the country at the time of our independence to have been blessed with a galaxy of philosopher-statesmen, at both the central and the state levels, who had undergone a baptism of fire during the freedom struggle and who, in a startling display of self-abnegation, rose above their little selves to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the public good—to the social, economic and political development of the people—by providing a 'leadership of ideas' and by sheer personal example, motivating the services to the ideal of selfless service. The nation was also fortunate in having a responsive, transparent and progressive administration which was of great help in advancing towards the goal of growth with social justice through the country's well thought out comprehensive plans. Political stability coupled with the willingness of the people to work in collaboration with the government for speedy socio-economic growth led to the unprecedented enthusiasm generated by the community development movement—an excellent programme that made for the people's active participation in the country's growth. The people, inspired by the political leadership's example of Gandhian simplicity, austerity and incorruptibility came forward to cooperate with the executive agencies in full measure.

The first two decades after independence brought to the people the fruits of freedom and the freedom to mould their destiny. Unfortunately, the impressive strides made during that time started slowing down in the third decade, primarily because of political instability compounded by wars thrust on us by our neighbours. The decline, both in terms of performance and achievement, has continued un-

abated. The latest phenomenon of criminalization of politics, political instability, frequent elections and unconcern for the long-term interests of the nation has led to the erosion of healthy leadership. The short-term interests are guided primarily by the instinct to survive and to collect as much money as possible to finance the frequent elections. Lack of integrity among political leaders in many states not only led to the disappearance of role models but also infected the services with the contagion. Six aborted attempts to enact the much needed Lokpal Bill to contain political corruption only exposes the lack of political will. No wonder Transparency International has found India ranking eighty-ninth among 129 countries in its bribery index.

These are moral ailments and we have to find answers through our age-old principles of ethics and spirituality. Of course, it is imperative to create conditions for political stability by letting governments complete their full term of five years through appropriate laws and electoral reforms. Once a full tenure is secured, attention will move from the transient need of survival to the creation of a clean, efficient, transparent and accountable administration and provide for the long-term interests of the people and the country. Alibis that transfer blame for administrative failures to the services below should be scotched by revival of the doctrine of 'ministerial responsibility', while at the

same time not allowing the guilty among the permanent executives to go scot free in the event of failures and abuse and misuse of power. The precedents of Lal Bahadur Shastri and T T Krishnamachari need to be followed in letter and spirit.

Vivekananda provided the perfect recipe for the political leadership when he said, 'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service.' It means the renunciation of the little self with a view to manifesting the higher Self and service to the people, particularly the poor, the depressed, the neglected and the diseased. Once these ideals are accepted by today's political leadership, most of the aforementioned failings and maladies will disappear.

Civil Servants as Social Engineers

The permanent executive is the main instrument available to the political executive for ensuring an effective delivery system, because it is this army of public servants which comes in direct contact with the people. Realizing the immense significance of this fact, what Sardar Patel said in the Constituent Assembly on 14 October 1948 is relevant not only for the top services but also for the army of public servants at the lower level:

I need hardly emphasise that an efficient, disciplined and dedicated service, assured of its prospects as a result of intelligent and honest work, is a sine qua non of sound administration under a democratic regime, even more than under an authoritarian rule. The civil administration must be above party and we should ensure that political considerations either in its recruitment or in the discipline and control are reduced to the minimum, if not eliminated altogether.

The true character of the services should be circumscribed by neutrality, impartiality, security, anonymity and meritocracy. In a parliamentary system, once these basic conditions are assailed, the entire structure and functioning of the permanent executive will come crumbling down. Unfortunately, latter-day developments in the political executive has not only led to the politicization of the services but has also af-



The buck stops here

fecting their impartiality, neutrality and integrity.

There was a time when leaders of the calibre of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant had the profound insight to refer not only to monetary integrity but also to the more important 'intellectual integrity'. Sardar Patel said: 'Today my secretaries can write a note opposite to my views. I have given them this freedom. I have told them that if you do not give your honest opinion for fear that it will displease your Minister, please, then you had better go.' Today intellectual integrity has taken the severest thrashing.

Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, after Sardar Patel, was the finest and ablest home minister that India ever had. He realized the importance of efficient, sympathetic, incorruptible civil services and never hesitated to air his profound views on every possible occasion. He wanted the civil servants to perceive their role as 'social engineers'. 'Our masters are the masses, the tillers of the soil, the workers in the factories and all those who bear the brunt of toil in this land in order to keep everyone of us in health in life and in order to promote that social sense which will ultimately lead us to the realisation of our goal of material prosperity. Our services have now to work with a missionary zeal.' In his view, human compassion and humane consideration of problems constituted the soul of administration. If this spirit of human sympathy, social sense, and identification with the masses is lost, the entire approach gets skewed. He said: 'The administrator is not the commandant ordering people about. He has to understand the people in a human way and stoop to conquer.' The spirit of service, he said, should be reinforced by a commitment to the constitution and not to any particular party in power or to a person who forms a part of the political executive. He added: 'The basic value of the spirit of service has to be guided by the highest ideals and principles. The new forces that are at work have to be reckoned with and while on the one hand you have to ensure advance in the material

and economic field, you have also to give equal if not greater importance to spiritual and cultural aspects.'

Pantji's concept of responsive administration included a proper understanding of the people's problems and a speedy and fair disposal of their grievances. These have to be tackled with an underlying spirit of service, with a sense of social purpose and human sympathy. Administrative leadership should merge not only with the leadership of ideas but also with the development of a proper moral attitude towards the people, particularly the distressed and the downtrodden, or the socially or economically weaker sections of society.

As I said earlier, all these profound requirements are under grave assault. In an article in R K Dar's book *Governance and the IAS*, I have stated that the basic problem of politicization of the services should be dealt with ruthlessly and effectively. I have also said in this context that

no measures will be of any avail unless the political executive, particularly in the states, first accept the basic principle of ministerial responsibility, service neutrality, fair treatment of civil servants, particularly at the decision-making level, and a transparent willingness to be advised honestly and impartially by the civil servants. The civil servant has to be treated as a public servant and not as the appointed servant to the party in power.

Drawing upon my experience as Central Vigilance Commissioner, I had drawn serious attention to the prevalent rampant corruption and for the urgent need to squarely punish the guilty and also deny to them, through draconian measures, the benefits of the use of ill-gotten gains through confiscation of the booty. Does this mean we have to throw up our hands in despair? My firm answer is no. The weaknesses are transient and need not cast a pall of gloom. We have to find political solutions to the problems created by the political executive. More importantly we have to strengthen our moral fibre.

Training of the Mind and the Spirit of Service

Swami Ranganathanandaji had a workable prescription for our administrative failings. During the six years that I was at the IAS Training School and the National Academy of Administration, I had made it a point to invite him for six talks every year. Of course he covered a broad spectrum. Here I will only refer to some of his ideas on enlightened administration. He used to elaborate at great length on two teachings of the Bhagavadgita: (a) '*Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana*; Your right is to work only, never to the fruits thereof.' (This is what Gandhiji's *anasakti yoga*, non-attachment to the fruits of action, is based upon); (b) '*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*; Yoga is efficiency in action.' Service, Ranganathanandaji thought, reflected the finest form of human interrelationship in any society that aimed at a 'fuller realization of human possibilities, both collectively and individually'. In his book *Philosophy of Service* he calls upon administrators and politicians to develop 'a capacity for impersonal service through imaginative sympathy' (52). He further states: 'The spirit of service raises all work, high or low in worldly estimation, into high work in the ethical and spiritual estimation, precisely because that spirit raises the worker behind all work to a high level of spirituality' (46). All along he emphasized the need to recognize (a) the divinity of all human beings, and (b) the consequent brotherhood of mankind irrespective of religion, caste, sex or creed.

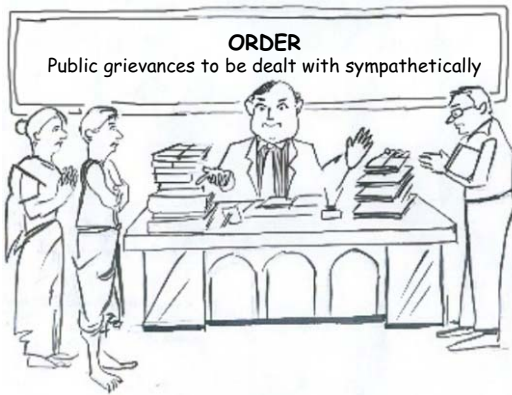
One only hopes that these pearls of wisdom of the late swami will continue to inspire all public servants not only in their endeavours to grapple with the opportunities and challenges of administration, but also in furthering the ideal of service to the people of the country in general and to the poor and downtrodden in particular. His book, however, does not refer to one basic point that he always used to make at the Academy. On many occasions he used to say that what was needed was not training in the

nitty-gritty of administration, such as laws, regulations and tools of implementation, though their knowledge was essential. Training of the mind was more important. What he meant to emphasize was the need to develop character efficiency on the basis of ethical sense and social awareness, and the formation of right attitudes towards one's fellow citizens. The mind has to be trained to grasp the basic values of the science of human possibilities (practical Vedanta) knowing that 'each soul is potentially divine', so that it evokes empathy and human sympathy at the sight of the smallest tear in the eyes of the poor and the ignorant even as it recognizes the intrinsic dignity of the individual. Only a mind so conditioned and elevated can deliver what is expected of an enlightened administrative system. In this context, he would always refer to the importance of choosing role models within the services and shaping one's thinking and action on the basis of their examples.

One could turn around and regretfully observe that there are not many left to serve as models. Even so, there are still some administrators around with sterling qualities of head and heart who are not only efficient and incorruptible, but are also driven by an impassioned zeal for real service to the people and the country. May the number of such people grow so that civil servants in general imbibe the right spirit of service and also have the courage to stand up to the unethical, partisan and narrow interests of politicians or parties in power.

Social Purpose and Human Sympathy

President A P J Abdul Kalam, speaking on Vision 2020 at the 92nd Science Congress in Ahmedabad, unfolded his dream of 'a nation where governance uses the best of technologies to be responsive, transparent, easily accessible and simple, and hence corruption-free; a nation where poverty has been alleviated, illiteracy and crimes against women are eradicated, and society is unalienated—a nation that is one of the best places to live in and brings smiles on a billion plus faces'. This dream has to be realized



'Put them in the file'

and it can be done only when it is recognized that a democratic welfare state exists for the sustenance of the common good and works incessantly for the common weal. Public servants, both political and permanent, have to stick to the ideal of service through an unflinching adherence to the highest standards of moral conduct and good performance. Even more importantly, in keeping with our ancient cultural traditions, they have to be imbued with the underlying spirit of selfless service and reinforced by a sense of social purpose and deep human sympathy.

Swami Vivekananda injected a spiritual content into our outlook by saying, 'Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve: serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege.' The idea has been picked up by Ranganathanandaji, who boldly questioned, 'Are you growing spiritually? Can you love others? Can you feel oneness with oth-

ers? Have you peace within yourself and do you radiate it around you? That is called spiritual growth, which is stimulated by meditation inwardly and by productive work done in a spirit of service outwardly.' No better exposition of sage Kanada's definition of dharma could have been made: '*Yato 'bhyudayaniḥśreyasa siddhiḥ sa dharmah*'; That which conduces to material prosperity as well as spiritual welfare is dharma.' The dual concepts of *abhyudaya* (human development in the material socio-economic field) and *niḥśreyasa* (human growth in the internal spiritual field implying spiritual transformation by elevating consciousness to a higher plane, leading to a culture of compassion, and harmony backed by altruistic and humanitarian impulses) go hand in hand and are not exclusive of each other, according to Ranganathanandaji.

To summarize, 'enlightened administration' is not just about achievement on the material, mundane plane alone—though that is essential—but also has to do with arduous, continuing endeavour in the Herculean task of moral and spiritual regeneration of the individual and the community. Democracy minus an educated, politically-aware electorate and an enlightened citizenship is sick and vulnerable; administration sans the 'spiritual quotient' is wayward and blind. In both these areas, India still has a long way to go. But we need not lose heart. 'Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached!' thundered Vivekananda. The struggle has to go on. In the end, God willing, India shall win.

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A Developed India: What You Can Do

If you are a clerk in, say, a government department, you can decide to work slightly more efficiently in clearing a public demand or a new project. If you can be an instrument in creating a feeling that the government (Central, state or municipal) works speedily and justly, you have created necessary conditions for a developed India. Don't think what can one person do. Many drops make a flood. A worker in a factory can decide to increase his or her productivity a little more and give attention to quality. ... At every level a feeling of contributing concretely towards a developed India is a must. The larger the number of persons who act the better it is.

—India 2020

Enlightened Entrepreneurs

L N JHUNJHUNWALA

An Example

My thoughts go back to 1979. I had gone to Swami Budhananda in a very agitated state of mind after a meeting with one of the then chief ministers and I remarked to him that in today's absolutely polluted political, economic and social atmosphere it was impossible for a businessman to survive in an honest way. I explained to him the reason for my statement. Budhanandaji asked me if I knew about the oldest business house of the country. Obviously my answer was that they were the Tatas. He advised me to read something about Jamsetji Tata and then meet him for a serious discussion. I got hold of a book on Jamsetji Tata and read it. He was an *ideal enlightened entrepreneur*. This man was obsessed with the idea that his motherland, with its vast iron-ore deposits, must have its own steel plant. An intense passion for a great and noble cause is the first thing required of an enlightened entrepreneur. Obsessed with this idea, Jamsetji identified a geologist in England and went to see him. He wanted the geologist to visit some iron-ore mines in Bihar and Orissa to make an estimate of the iron-ore requirement for the proposed steel plant. The geologist was taken aback and asked, 'Are you aware of the huge financial and organizational resources that are needed to put up a steel plant?' Jamsetji's confidence ultimately impressed the geologist and he visited India at his request. India was not even free at that time. We were slaves of the British and Tata dreamt of an Indian steel plant! However, the geologist did identify the iron-ore mines.

A few years later we find Jamsetji travelling to the US to acquire steel technology. It was a strange coincidence that the ship in which he travelled from Yokohama to Vancouver in

1893 had another passenger, a young monk of thirty, and sixteen years younger to him. Jamsetji was travelling first class and this monk, who later became the world-famous Swami Vivekananda, was also travelling first class, though reluctantly, because the Maharaja of Khetri, who had great admiration for Swamiji, had insisted on it as it was a matter of prestige for him. Swamiji had long discussions with Jamsetji on the ship. Detailed records of these conversations are not available, but fortunately a letter dated 23 November 1898, written from Bombay by Jamsetji to Swami Vivekananda, is available. The latter had become world famous in 1893 after his speech at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. Jamsetji's letter must be quoted here in full so that readers can appreciate the workings of his mind.

Dear Swami Vivekananda,

I trust, you remember me as a fellow-traveller on your voyage from Japan to Chicago. I very much recall at this moment your views on the growth of ascetic spirit in India, and the duty, not of destroying, but of diverting it into useful channels.

I recall these ideas in connection with my scheme of Research Institute of Science for India, of which you have doubtless heard or read. It seems to me that no better use can be made of the ascetic spirit than the establishment of monasteries or residential halls for men dominated by this spirit where they should live with ordinary decency and devote their lives to the cultivation of sciences—natural and humanistic. I am of opinion that if such a crusade in favour of an asceticism of this kind were undertaken by a competent leader, it would greatly help asceticism, science, and the good name of our common country; and I know not who could make a more fitting general of such a campaign than Vivekananda. Do you think you would care to apply yourself to the mission of galvanizing into

life our ancient traditions in this respect? Perhaps, you had better begin with a fiery pamphlet rousing our people in this matter. I shall cheerfully defray all the expenses of publication.

With kind regards, I am, dear Swami,

Yours faithfully,
Jamsetji N. Tata¹

Insight and Vision in Entrepreneurship

An enlightened entrepreneur is able to see the inside of a man. He is not swayed by appearances. A normal entrepreneur would not think of wasting his time on a monk. But Tata remembered him even after five years and sought his assistance for the establishment of monasteries where people could cultivate the natural and humanistic sciences.

An enlightened entrepreneur sees into the future. Tata was dreaming of an institute of science for research in fundamental sciences. No records are available as to what Swamiji wrote in reply. But *Prabuddha Bharata*, started at the instance of Vivekananda himself, expressed open-hearted admiration and support for Tata's scheme in its editorial column of April 1899:

MR. TATA'S SCHEME

We are not aware if any project at once so opportune and so far-reaching in its beneficent effects was ever mooted in India, as that of the Post-graduate Research University of Mr. Tata. The scheme grasps the vital point of weakness in our national well-being with a clearness of vision and tightness of grip, the masterliness of which is only equalled by the munificence of the gift with which it is ushered to the public. ...

... Mr. Tata's scheme paves the path of placing into the hands of the Indians this knowledge of Nature—the preserver and the destroyer, the ideal good servant as well as the ideal bad master,—that by having the knowledge, they might have power over her and be successful in the struggle for existence. ...

... We repeat: No idea more potent for good to the whole nation has seen the light of day in modern India. Let the whole nation therefore, forgetful of class or sect interests, join in making it a success.²

Prabuddha Bharata, Vivekananda's paper, again came out to extend its support to the scheme on the occasion of Queen Victoria's death. All sorts of suggestions were being made to perpetuate the memory of the Queen. But *Prabuddha Bharata* made perhaps the most significant suggestion in this respect. It wrote in its March 1901 issue:

With the spectre of famine stalking over the land, we cannot think of a worthier memorial to Victoria, the Great and the Good, than the inauguration of some effective and permanent measure for strengthening the people against the ravages of the scourge. Everybody is agreed that this can be best done, by founding a large and thoroughly well-equipped central institution for industrial development of the country. ... It would be an exceedingly happy arrangement if the Tata Research University scheme could be combined with this, for the princely gift of the Parsi patriot is fully deserving of the honour of being associated with her Majesty's memorial.³

The Ramakrishna Mission maintained the same respect and admiration for Jamsetji Tata even after Vivekananda's demise in July 1902. After Tata's death in 1904, *Prabuddha Bharata* paid a rare tribute to him, which amply shows what importance the Mission was giving to science, industry and commerce for India's material welfare: 'India has suffered an irreparable loss in the passing away of her truly good and patriotic son, the first great captain of Indian industry, Mr. J.N. Tata of Bombay. ... The making of a prosperous Indian nation depends on the qualities of head and heart like those possessed by Mr. Tata. A few more Tatas would change the face of India.'⁴

Inspired by Swamiji's appreciation of Tata's efforts, his Irish disciple, Miss Margaret Noble, came forward to use her influence and help Jamsetji get British permission for his project. She took the help of two influential American women, Mrs Ole Bull and Miss MacLeod, to plead with the British Government. She arranged a dinner meeting for Jamsetji with Sir George Birdwood of the Education Department in London. Mrs Bull and Miss MacLeod

were also present. Unfortunately Birdwood remained insistent that the management of the institute be left to the British.

Swamiji's Foresight

After his return to India in 1897, Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It was a unique organization among all Indian monastic orders. While framing its rules and regulations he spoke of the need to establish a technical institute:

Now the aim is to gradually develop this Math into an all-round university. In it, along with the cultivation of philosophy and religion, a full-fledged technical institute will have to be established. This is to be done first. Other departments may be gradually added later on. ... In Central India, near Hazaribagh and such other districts, plenty of fertile, well-watered, healthy land may even now be available. In that region a big plot of land will have to be acquired and on it a big technical school, and gradually factories etc. will have to be started. As new ways of production of food will be discovered, people will begin to settle down in that colony. Then you can mould them in any shape you like.⁵

Indeed, Jamsetji had initially considered a site near Hazaribagh rich in iron-ore deposits as the venue for his steel plant.

Vivekananda further said, 'We talk foolishly against material civilisation. The grapes are sour. ... Material civilisation, nay, even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor. Bread! Bread! I do not believe in a God, who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven!'⁶

I cannot think of a better source of inspiration for entrepreneurs than the remarks of Swami Vivekananda and the example of Jamsetji Tata.

The Tata Work Ethic

The foundation that Jamsetji laid was so strong that it produced a stalwart like J R D Tata. JRD started the Tata Airlines in 1932 along with an English friend, Neville Vincent, in which Vincent was to get one-third of the

profit. The investments came from the Tatas. The profits were enormous. The contract expired after five years. The Tatas' legal consultant, G D Choksi, felt that the contract should not be renewed, but JRD was not comfortable with the suggestion. He consulted another adviser, Dinshaw Daji, who opined that Choksi was legally correct but morally wrong. JRD went by Daji's advice.

JRD never even thought in terms of tax avoidance or tax evasion. In 1979, when one of his friends observed that the Tatas had not expanded as much as other groups in the country had, he said that he knew about it. If he had done some of the things that the other groups had done, he would have been twice as big as he was then. But he would not resort to such things, he said emphatically, and he would not have it any other way.

JRD was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1992. His employees had organized a function to felicitate him. JRD mentioned in his address that an American economist had predicted that India would be an economic superpower in the next century. Then he added: 'I don't want India to be an economic superpower. I want India to be a happy country.'

Other Examples

When I look back on the last one hundred years of Indian business, I remember Sri G D Birla's generosity. Gandhiji would often approach him for donations. Once GD was so much swayed by a cause that he sent Gandhiji a blank cheque. Gandhiji had to write to him that he felt embarrassed when GD sent blank cheques to him and requested him to write the amount. In GD we have another enlightened entrepreneur to draw inspiration from.

I also recall Sarabhai and the famous Ahmedabad textile industry strike of 1921. Sarabhai was the chairman of the mill owners' association and had great admiration for Gandhiji. Gandhiji was staying at his house in Ahmedabad. When the strike continued for a week the workers began suffering acutely—and

Gandhiji took up the leadership of the labour agitation against Sarabhai! Sarabhai's own sister was also on the labour side. Still there was no trace of bitterness in Sarabhai. There again is an enlightened entrepreneur.

Learning the Ropes of Entrepreneurship

Let me now recall some of my own experiences as an entrepreneur to highlight some aspects of the evolution of Indian industry and business over the last sixty years. I was born in a small village of Rajasthan in 1928 in a family which was going through difficult times. My father was an ordinary jute broker in Calcutta. The men used to live in a large room which was used as a traditional office during the day by twenty people who would work sitting on mats and *chowkis* (wooden seats), and at night the same room was converted into a sleeping room when they slept on the floor after removing the *chowkis*. The women used to stay in the native village maintaining themselves on the small amounts of money sent by the working members from Calcutta out of their meagre income.

I was a gold medallist in mathematics from Calcutta University, graduating in 1946 from the Scottish Church College, where Swami Vivekananda had also studied. Thereafter I joined the postgraduate classes and was a favourite student of Satyendranath Bose, who worked with Einstein and discovered the famous Bose-Einstein theory. My uncle had resigned from the services and started an independent business. I used to assist him in my leisure hours in the mornings and evenings. This business was a partnership concern. It is my misfortune that family tradition and family pressure pushed me into business; otherwise I would have been somewhere in Jamsetji Tata's scientific institute.

My story of entrepreneurship starting from 1946 is, in a way, the story of the development of Indian entrepreneurship under diverse kinds of government policies that regulated industry and business under strict controls and restrictions. India had the monopoly of jute at

the time of independence. Export of jute goods was a lucrative area and I started there. Export was controlled by the government and applications were invited for export quotas, which were fixed by the government for each country. Applications were often made in various names to grab more quotas. There were times when I felt so sad at my fall from the splendourous starry sky—I would have studied astronomy—to the shabby corridors of the controller's office crowded with people waiting to find out the fate of their quota applications.

It is a long and complex story, but I was able to make an exclusive sale to a company in Thailand belonging to a former prime minister of that country, Mr Luang Thamrong, which entitled me to a special quota. Unfortunately, there was a crash in the prices of jute products and the Thai Bank, under Mr Thamrong's influence, refused to honour its irrevocable letter of credit. My legal counsel was also a former prime minister, Mr Mam Raj Semi Pramoj. I met the ambassadors of Britain and USA in Thailand for their assistance in the litigation. The Indian ambassador took me to the Thai prime minister. All the foreign banks and the International Chamber of Commerce, Geneva, gave evidence in my favour. I won the case in the first court but the case went to an appellate court and ultimately to the supreme court, where some kind of a settlement for half the amount I was entitled to was reached.

India had just become independent. The political environment was very depressing for somebody who was dreaming of being a scientist but had started his career in business. The general image of the businessman was that of a black marketeer or profiteer. Films caricatured him as a fat man with a potbelly, a *pagri* (turban) round his head, lending money in the villages and cruelly recovering his loans given to poor farmers at exorbitant interest rates. The national atmosphere was all anti-industry. Pandit Nehru had appointed the Mahalanobis Committee to advise the government on economic matters. The report also was anti-indus-

try. Even men like G D Birla, whom Gandhiji regarded as his fifth son, were humiliated.

In the Nehru era there was scant respect for the creators of wealth and businessmen were looked down upon. It was as if there was a national contempt for Goddess Lakshmi. Strained relations with the USA, the world's richest country, helped spread this feeling among all sections of society. It is therefore no surprise that the goddess of wealth deserted us. The British had left us large sterling balances in spite of their unprecedented loot of India between 1846 and 1946. All these balances vanished. We incurred heavy debts till a situation developed in 1991 that we had to mortgage gold to get dollars to pay the salaries of government servants.

However, God was kind to me. I had a close friend, Churiwal, who was two years junior to me in college. His father controlled a jute mill in Nepal. Nepal did not come under the purview of Indian controls and their jute bags could be exported freely. I offered him attractive prices for the jute bags and entered into a large contract. He was happy and I also made a fortune. But once Churiwal came to know that Nepalese jute was outside government control, he would not let me earn the profits I earned from the first deal. Having earned one lakh rupees and having known the possibility, I started exploring the prospects of exporting Indian bags to Singapore and Hong Kong, which used to offer very high prices for the bags and divert them to South Africa, which was banned by India for all business. I did succeed and made substantial exports of jute bags to Hong Kong.

Further Experiences

I went through fifteen years of experience in various types of international trade from 1946 to 1961. I got an opportunity to travel to Alexandria in Egypt to buy a shipload of salt, for which a Bihar Congress leader had procured an import licence. Then I had the chance of visiting Italy to sell iron ore to enable the State Trading Corporation to break the Japanese

iron-ore cartel. And I went to the USA a number of times between 1947 and 1962 for export of jute goods. All this was very exciting.

When I think of the national scene between 1947 and 1962, I have no hesitation in saying that these fifteen years are a story of corruption at the highest political level—ministers supported by top bureaucrats. I had to wait for hours and hours outside the under-secretary's room so that I could tell him my problems when he walked to the lavatory! I would run behind him begging for a hearing. Business consisted of getting permits from the government and eighty-five per cent of the time was spent in government offices. But I have also come across a number of bureaucrats of very high integrity who would fight with the minister to support a right cause when the minister wanted to favour someone else for vested interests. There are a number of examples of such honest officers. But I was fed up with the vagaries of international trade and decided to start some industry.

This again starts the long story of how I got the licence for a spinning mill of 12,500 spindles. It brought me to Bhilwara, where I started my first industrial venture in the shape of a small textile-spinning unit in 1960 in partnership with four people. I faced serious trouble even before the first one lakh rupees of the eighty-lakh-rupee venture were spent. The mill, however, did come up and we started manufacturing cotton hosiery yarn. We were determined to make the best yarn in India. I took my initial lessons in the textile industry staying in Ahmedabad at the hostels of Ahmedabad Textile Industry Research Association (ATIRA). The famous Indian Institute of Management had just been started in the same campus, and I had an exposure to the academic side of management. Polyester fibre (Terene brand) was just entering India. We were among the first people to manufacture blended polyester-viscose yarn. I was very fond of reading international textile magazines and dreamt of manufacturing zero-defect yarn. Even though our unit was very small, we made a name for

ourselves in the country. Today Bhilwara has more than a hundred entrepreneurs. It has become the world's largest producer of polyester-viscose suitings, producing more than one crore metres of suiting fabric per month. We started with 12,500 spindles and now have 3,00,000 spindles, plus weaving, processing and garment-making units providing supplies to the world's top brands such as Hugo Boss, Polo and Marks & Spencer of Europe, and Mary's of the USA. However, we have not been able to create our own brand; that goal of ours still remains to be achieved.

After getting a good feel of the textile industry in thirteen years (1960-73), my mind became restless to start something which would give me a taste of high technology and international management. This led me to the graphite-electrodes industry. It took sixteen years from the date I applied for a licence to the day the plant began production. It was an incredible experience.

We were slaves of our French partners, on whom we were dependent for the technology. It was a very humiliating experience but extremely educative. Luckily again, I was able to contact the chairman of my French partners, Pechiney, who were at that time the largest privately owned corporation. The rank of the chairman of this company was equal to that of a cabinet minister in the French government and would have to deal with the French prime minister. I was given five minutes' time but somehow the discussion started with Hindu religion and lasted for half an hour! It proved to be a turning point. From then on the whole atmosphere changed. There was no more humiliation and it became a respectful partnership.

The entire graphite-electrodes industry was confined to just four large corporations. It was quite a job to make Pechiney agree to give us a negligible slice of five hundred tons of the world export market of three lakh tons to enable us to get a feel of the international markets and international quality. Though they did agree to try our products for export, they would

not let us talk to the customers directly. If there was a quality problem, Taiwan would tell Paris, and they would send someone to Taiwan to study the problem. All this caused a lot of delay.

Graphite electrodes were the domain of two American corporations, one Japanese consortium, and one French and one German company, all of whom had more or less formed a cartel. We could supply only under French quota. The cartel broke up due to a serious misunderstanding. The market, which was kept at a high-price level by the cartel, crashed. Each corporation wanted to grab a larger share. But India was a low-cost producer and could just export at a break-even price. Our French partners allowed us to enter the export market. But it was a hard job to make export-quality goods. The French had only given us technology that would limit us to Indian quality requirements. I became very friendly with many people in various levels of management in the French company at a personal level. When one of their technicians retired, I employed him in the Indian company and was able to develop world-class graphite electrodes, though it took us ten years to do that. With the emergence of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the opening up of the world market, we had access to the markets of all the rich countries of America and Europe. We were only two people in this business in India. We developed an Export Development Fund and gradually both of us started exporting about 80% of our production. The French company was taken over by the Germans. The French sold their interests to us and we were absolutely independent. Our exports grew from 500 tons in 1978 to 3,000 tons by 1992 and 10,000 tons by 1995. Today we export 30,000 tons of graphite. Practically 90% of our production goes to the USA, Europe, South Korea and Taiwan. By March 2006, the figures are expected to touch 50,000 tons and possibly 70,000 tons by March 2007. India would then be among the world's top three producers. Total Indian exports are already worth Rs 260 crore per annum and should jump to Rs

560 crore in 2007. Still some of the extremely complicated types of electrodes are beyond our reach. Our innovative research and development are nowhere near our Western counterparts.

In 1992 private organizations were allowed to enter the hydel-power sector. By then I had spent nearly fifty years in business and industry. I availed this opportunity and took up a 90 MW project at Malana near Kullu. This brought me in touch with the world's top power producers, Hydro-Quebec of Canada. The size of their operations are amazing. The normal time taken to complete a hydel project in India was considered to be seven years. The same project in Canada would take just one year. We started asking ourselves why, because every day saved meant four lakh rupees to us. We appointed a Canadian consultant. Our experts sat with them for days and days in Canada. Then the Canadian experts came over to India and prepared a detailed bar chart targeting completion in two and a half years. We took up the challenge. Our whole team was highly motivated. In the final six months it appeared that we would be late by fifteen days. But the targets were revised on a daily basis to make up for this fifteen-day delay. I remember that during the last ten days we even set hourly targets so that we did not fail our goal. This kind of passion was highly inspiring.

Once the chief minister of Himachal Pradesh was being interviewed by the press, and he was asked what he would rate as his greatest achievement as chief minister? He said it was the completion of the Malana hydel-power project in two and a half years.

Social Responsibilities of Business

I now take the liberty of writing a few lines on the social responsibilities of business. I recall that around 1960 Jai Prakash Narayan inspired a few of us businessmen to organize a seminar on the subject. M C Bhandari played the leading role. A team was formed for follow-up on the seminar and I was a member of the team.

The Mafatlal group adopted a number of villages under the inspiration of their guru. Once I visited some of those villages, where good work was being done. For example, liquor had completely vanished from those villages. Mafatlal was also responsible for the milk revolution in the country. There used to be one Mani Bhai with Acharya Vinoba Bhawe. Mani Bhai and Mafatlal introduced Jersey and Holstein cows and encouraged farmers to increase their milk yield. The Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF) was established. Vinobaji was against artificial insemination, but Mani Bhai disagreed with him. The milk yield of these cows increased to as high as forty litres a day, but ultimately Mani Bhai himself fixed a ceiling of twenty litres. It proved to be a great step in increasing the income of the rural folk. At my request BAIF established a centre in Bhilwara.

I was in Calcutta in those days. In 1969 Sitaram Seksaria inspired our group of friends and I took the initiative, under his leadership, in organizing a three-day Gandhi birth centenary celebration. Eminent Gandhians like Kaka Kalelkar, Acharya Kripalani, Narayan Desai (son of Mahadev Desai) and Prafulla Ghosh attended it. I came into close contact with them. The Gandhian theory of 'trusteeship in business' was discussed in detail. This Gandhian seminar attracted the attention of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, and with the active participation of the Ramakrishna Mission some of us institutionalized a body under the name 'Gram Samparka Kendra'. The village of Krishnachandrapur was selected and work was done there for a few years. This brought me first-hand experience of the intensity of rural poverty in India.

It was around 1983. Swami Budhananda had initiated a culture change in our corporate life. He asked me to read an article in *Prabuddha Bharata* titled 'Business Management and Indian Mysticism' by Dr S K Chakraborty,⁷ a senior professor at the reputed Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, and a great devotee of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Budhanandaji arranged my meeting with Dr Chakraborty. Dr Chakraborty wanted to make a practical beginning by taking courses on Indian ethos in management for our group. Budhanandaji and Dr Chakraborty were to prepare a complete syllabus. Unfortunately, Budhanandaji passed away before this could be done. But Dr Chakraborty evolved the course material. We had sessions spread over two days and two nights in which ten of us, including the chief executives of three plants, participated. I persuaded Mr C D Khanna, who had just retired from the chairmanship of the Industrial Finance Corporation of India, to participate and advise us whether the concepts were practical or merely idealistic. Ours was a high-powered and experienced group. Dr Chakraborty was a great orator and above the temptation of money. I felt guilty that while my company would have had to pay a minimum of thirty thousand rupees for an IIM consultancy, Dr Chakraborty insisted that he would not 'sell knowledge', even when so many man-hours were involved. He ultimately agreed to accept three hundred rupees as donation for the Ramakrishna Mission. The courses were conducted four times a year and I am proud to say that IIM Calcutta started a separate course on 'Management of Human Values' on the basis of our experience. The initial budget was Rs 75 lakh, of which our contribution was Rs 15 lakh, and the main symposium hall was named 'Bhilwara Symposium'. Later on Tata, Godrej, UTI and LIC all contributed generously. The total amount collected was Rs 2.75 crore. Dr Chakraborty has now retired, but he has inspired dedicated people for this cause and the institution continues to function smoothly.

Swamiji's Predictions

Swami Vivekananda had made three predictions: (i) India would be free in fifty years, (ii) it should be wary of an attack by China, and (iii) India would be brighter, wealthier and stronger than it was during the glorious Ve-

dic-Upanishadic period. The first two have proved correct. The whole world is already saying that the twenty-first century belongs to India and China. As I mentioned earlier, an entrepreneur like me used to spend nearly eighty-five per cent of his time at the state secretariat in unproductive work; now he does not spend more than fifteen per cent of his time like that. These days the Indian entrepreneur talks about his rightful place in international industry—he wants to see his company ranked among the top *Fortune* 500 companies!

Long ago, Swami Atmanandaji gave me Marie Louise Burke's book on Swamiji's first visit to the West. I lost myself in the book. Subsequently, I read all the four volumes that had appeared until then. I know Bengali well and read all the seven volumes of Sankari Prasad Basu's *Swami Vivekananda o Samakalin Bharatvarsha* (Swami Vivekananda and Contemporary India). That was the first time I saw industry and trade being regarded with respect, and I was able to get over my feeling of inferiority. Vivekananda made me feel that I was also doing a service to my country. Now I am confident that his third prediction too is going to prove correct.

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Towards Enlightened Health Care

DR H SUDARSHAN

Health is today a development issue. It is being increasingly recognized that good health is an important contributor to productivity and economic growth. But it is, first and foremost, an end in itself. In a poor country like India where health is an important asset for most of the people, it assumes even greater significance. India has articulated its important commitment towards public health often enough. Since independence, the government has expressed its intentions about public health reforms year after year. There have indeed been large gains in health status since independence. In 1952, India became the first country in the world to launch a national programme, emphasizing family planning to the extent necessary for reducing birth rates 'to stabilize the population at a level consistent with the requirements of national economy'. Life expectancy has gone up from 36 years in 1951 to 62.5 years in 2000. Infant mortality rate is down from 146 in 1951 to 60 in 2003. Crude birth rate has been reduced from 40.8 in 1951 to 24.8 in 2003 and crude death rate from 25 to 8.0 in the same period. One of the major reasons for these gains has been the development of a vast public-health infrastructure, with sub-centres for every 5,000 persons, primary health centres (PHCS) for every 30,000 persons, and community health centres for every 1,00,000 persons. Immunization to control communicable diseases has made a major contribution to these gains; success stories include small-pox eradication, the near elimination of leprosy, and the extraordinary social mobilization for polio eradication. Improvements in determinants such as water supply and sanitation have also helped outcomes. There is today an increasing awareness among policy-makers of the linkages between health, rural infrastruc-

ture, literacy and development.

These national-level figures mask the wide disparities that exist between these parameters with respect to individual states. While Kerala reports an infant mortality rate of 16/1,000 live births, Rajasthan reports close to 90. The indicators from the so-called BIMARU states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) are much below similar indicators from other states. There are huge gaps between urban and rural areas, between developed and relatively remote areas, and between the affluent and the marginalized sections of society—women and children, tribals, etc.

A comparison of goals with actual achievements reveals the real picture: we are nowhere near the targets, except for life expectancy, crude death rate, and polio immunization. With its knowledge base, its administrative and institutional strengths, and its growth potential, India is capable of much higher levels of achievement. There are some major concerns and cross-cutting themes that affect all aspects and sectors of health care. These need to be tackled in an urgent and sustained manner. Many of these factors are not specific to the health-care system itself; nonetheless, they occupy a central role in the overall health scenario. They are also the problems of the larger society within which our efforts in health care are located. Therefore, they impinge and distort our efforts to evolve a health-care system that is committed to equity, quality and integrity with special focus on primary health care and public health.

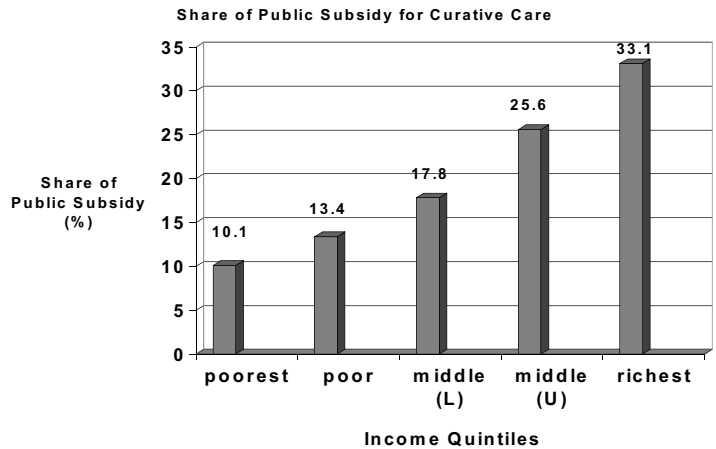
Various issues such as neglect of public-health principles in planning, organization and management of health-care services with inadequate emphasis on tackling the determinants of health, particularly nutrition, water supply and

sanitation, housing, literacy, and poverty alleviation, which are crucial to public health, are central to this deficiency. These were identified even as far back as 1946 in the Bhoré Committee blueprint that was accepted by independent India as a framework for health-service development. In addition, distortions in primary health care with inadequate efforts at community participation, verticalization of national health programs, and compartmentalization of health care instead of comprehensive health care are other issues. It is clear that many of these areas are outside the direct scope of the government health departments. However, our health services have failed to recognize that health care is interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral. Without exerting themselves and actively interacting with the concerned developmental sectors, the health services by and large provide only curative medical services, which are often of poor quality.

We could have achieved better outcomes in health if the following issues had been given due importance:

Equity in Health Care

The principle of equity in health is rooted in recognition of health as a human right. Equity in health services requires that health-care services be accessible to all people equally; they should not be any less accessible to the disadvantaged sections of the population than they are in the better-off areas; nor should there be disparities on the basis of gender or socio-economic or other considerations. The relatively affluent sections of the population are increasingly utilizing the public health-care system. A recent study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) establishes this fact. The above graph is even more disturb-



ing considering the fact that close to 70% of Indians have to do with just 20-30% share in public subsidy, while the minority (affluent) population uses close to 60% of it!

Inequity is multi-dimensional, hence the need to assess relative inequities among three broad groups: those below the poverty line, marginalized groups, and women. Since inequity is due to income differentials as well as societal prejudices, analysis based solely on income criteria would be incomplete. The SC/ST populations serve as a sensitive indicator for inequality. Being socially and economically the most marginalized sections, they face the double burden of social exclusion and poverty. They comprise 22% of the total population, but have a higher proportion of families below the poverty line; 81% are landless labourers with practically no assets. Similarly, women command a lower social value, which is reflected in the family's lower expenditure on their health care, delays in referrals, denial of treatment, or under-reporting. Thus, typically, an SC/ST woman could face the triple disadvantage of income, caste and sex.

Quality of Health Care

Quality has been neglected as efforts have ended with availability and accessibility of health services. It is important to consider the quality of care which is being provided by the

existing health-care institutions. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure the quality of health care. For this there is need to have regulations which would assure quality. These regulations and government guidelines are even more relevant in these days of mushrooming 'nursing homes' and 'diagnostic laboratories' without the basic minimum standards of quality.

Primary Health Care

Primary health care is essential health care, universally accessible and acceptable with community participation, and includes promotion of health, prevention of diseases and rehabilitation and management of common illnesses at affordable cost. It is the 'key to attaining an acceptable level of health care for all as a part of overall development and in the spirit of social justice'. There is a need to strengthen the community-participation component in primary care. Also, primary health care requires decentralization with a need for delegation of responsibility and commensurate authority. Ideally, the community itself should provide managerial control. Decentralization is especially necessary for logistics and supply. Appropriate technology is one of the core components of primary health care. It includes practical, scientifically sound health measures for diagnostic, therapeutic or rehabilitative purposes which are accessible and affordable to the community.

Public Health

'Improvement in health is likely to come, in the future as in the past, from modification of the conditions which lead to disease, rather than from intervention into the mechanisms of disease after it has occurred.' The primary-health-care approach to public health was articulated and accepted at a WHO-UNICEF conference in Alma Ata in 1978. It expanded the scope and strategies for public health. Recognizing the limitations of medical science alone in improving the health of people, it emphasized the need to address determinants of health through inter-sectoral collaboration, especially with the depart-



Cost-effective sanitary technology:
Needs wide dissemination

ments of agriculture, food supply, water supply and sanitation, housing, and education. Public health is neglected both as a discipline and as a profession. Disease-surveillance systems are not functioning. Many important government posts overseeing public health at state and national levels often have people with only medical but not public-health backgrounds. The departments of community medicine of the medical colleges make a very weak impression on medical students, and it is often perceived as the least desirable choice. Inter-sectoral work to ensure safe drinking water and provision of sanitation facilities is ongoing but the coverage is poor. There is still a high prevalence of water-related diseases. A large proportion of primary health centres continue to function suboptimally. Coverage and quality of basic antenatal care and immunization continues to be low. Diseases like tuberculosis continue to take a heavy toll with poor commitment from the health services. School health services are of poor quality and have limited coverage. Community mental health-care programmes have not been taken up seriously, though the epidemiological burden has been well documented. The essential-drug concept and rational drug use are confined to theory. People's lack of confidence in the public health services is growing,

and planned, systematic efforts are required to revive and incorporate public health practice into the Directorate of Health and Family Welfare Services.

As more individuals survive till middle age, the number of years of exposure to risk factors of chronic disease increases. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) will gradually become the dominant contributors to the burden of disease, their share increasing from an estimated 33% in 1998 to 57% in 2020. In fact, even at the present stage of health transition, India contributes substantially to the global burden of NCDs. In 1990, India accounted for 19% of all deaths, 16% of all NCD deaths and 17% of all cardio-vascular disease (CVD) deaths in the world. The emerging burden of NCDs poses a special threat to the poor due to the often prolonged and expensive treatment required for these conditions and because of their greater exposure to tobacco and alcohol. The management of NCDs is often technology-intensive and expensive. At present, programmes for NCD control in India are either non-existent or functioning at a very low level. Traditionally, public-health approaches to NCD control have consisted of a high-risk strategy, targeting those with high-level risk factors and employing interventions, usually with drugs, to reduce them; and a population strategy that attempts to reduce risk-factor levels in the whole community, usually through lifestyle-related measures. Along with these approaches, effective low-cost case-management strategies are required for those who manifest symptoms of disease. Such technologies are available, but they await widespread awareness and dissemination. In this regard, a national-level campaign against tobacco and alcohol will serve as an excellent long-term investment.

Women and Child Health

Children under 5 years of age and women in the reproductive age group make up 36.2% of the population of India. The consequences of the poor health of women, as against that of



Women's health: A priority

men, are far greater since their poor health translates into the poor health of families, particularly the children's. A mother's death has twice the impact of a father's death on child survival. 'Woman-days' lost due to ill health therefore include many hidden but critical factors which have impact on the family and, in the larger context, on the health of the community and the nation. The maternal mortality rate (MMR) continues to remain at an unacceptable level of 408 per 10,000 live births, although there are state-wise variations. Among the well-documented causes of high MMR are the socio-economic status of women, inadequate antenatal care, the low proportion of institutional deliveries, and the non-availability of trained birth attendants in two-thirds of the cases. The poor status of maternal health is inextricably linked with gender disparities that pervade all aspects of life in India. The female child (0-6 age group) sex ratio has worsened, and this is a cause for concern. In addition, the threat posed by HIV/AIDS as a medical and a social problem has added a whole new dimension to this vulnerable group.

Population Stabilization

In the recently announced National Population Policy 2000, it is explicitly stated that the stabilization of population is an essential requirement for promoting sustainable development with equitable distribution, but this has

to be within the context of enhancing the outreach of primary education, improving essential amenities such as sanitation and drinking water, health care, employment, and empowerment of women. The latter is of utmost importance in formulating any policy on population. Hitherto there was undue stress on population control without focus on reproductive and child health. On the contrary, a rational, rights-based approach with stress on the reproductive rights of women and greater decision-making on their part is the proper approach. Any family-planning initiative must maintain gender equity in evoking participation. Enhancing male participation in the family-planning programmes is vital. Also, the acceptance of family-planning services depends on the quality and accessibility of the services. It should also be voluntary and should be through informed choice. Access to safe abortion services, for both married and unmarried women, with stress on privacy and safety, are also components of a good family-planning programme. Conscious efforts must be made for inducing a change in social attitudes regarding raising the age bar for marriage.

Health Needs of Special Groups

There is need to focus on special groups—the aged, tribals, people with disabilities and street children. With strides in health, the number of aged is only going to increase. Health care in tribal areas is very poor. Appropriate policy changes and specific programmes need to be implemented to accommodate the special needs of these groups.

Human Resource Development for Health

'So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.' —Swami Vivekananda

Health services require large numbers of well-trained qualified professionals and workers, with a variety of skills and appropriate knowledge, and an aptitude for improving the



Training rural health workers in adequate numbers:
A pressing necessity

health of the people and for reducing suffering due to ill health. It is necessary to have formal and informal education centres to train persons of the requisite *quality* in adequate *numbers*. There is today a need for a committed workforce in peripheral areas. However, the present perception of a poor work atmosphere in the periphery lacking challenge is weaning away doctors either to the cities or abroad, with the net result that the majority of the population gets personnel for whom the periphery is a 'last resort'. There is also a lack of any form of orientation in ethics for medical students. With increased commercialization of medical education the quality of medical education is deteriorating. Out of 172 medical colleges and 123 dental colleges in the country, 23 medical and 38 dental colleges are in Karnataka. A teacher shortage of approximately 30–40% is observed in all the health science institutions in Karnataka, resulting in sub-standard education.

Health Systems Management

There have been numerous technical packages from WHO and other international agencies, which provide only a marginal increment in the standard health indicators. Good leadership and good governance are the need of the hour and could lead to a quantum jump in health outcomes. The health sector, with the maximum interaction with the people, was found to be the second most corrupt sector by a

study conducted by Transparency International. Active vigilance through the Lokayukta coupled with capacity building in health and hospital management, leadership training and welfare of health staff is the need of the day. There is also the need to facilitate a people's movement against corruption, build awareness regarding the use of the Right to Information Bill and the Transparency Act, a networking of people of integrity and an effective Consumer Forum.

Health Financing

In spite of elaborate evidence suggesting that health spending has immense benefits for the economy of the state, spending in terms of percentage of GDP has been as low as 0.9%. Moreover, though the public health services play a vital role, their contribution to the overall health-service sector in the country is low. In 2000, 87% of the total expenditure on health was private, as opposed to 13% public expenditure. The per capita public expenditure on health (in \$) was 11 in India, as opposed to 16 in Pakistan and 35 in Sri Lanka. China with a higher population also had a per capita expenditure of 18. Clearly, in India the low outlay scales result in the rural areas and the economically weaker sections being deprived. In addition, the perception of better care in the private sector is quite widespread, and illness imposes a significant lifetime risk. Even in government hospitals, the out-of-pocket expenditure is significant, and hence the vicious cycle of poverty and ill health further distance the poorer sections from health.

Rational Drug Use

The words of Robert Hutchison, who wrote a treatise on clinical examination, come to my mind: *'From inability to let alone; from too much zeal for what is new and contempt for what is old; from putting knowledge before wisdom and science before art and cleverness before common sense; from treating patients as cases and from making the cure of the disease more grievous than*

the endurance of the same, Good Lord, deliver us.' The problems of irrational drug use are so ingrained even within qualified medical practitioners that it is unlikely to go away just with legislation. Due stress in the medical curriculum is essential. Rational use of drugs requires that patients receive medications appropriate to their needs, in doses that meet their own individual requirement, for an adequate period of time and at the lowest cost to them and their community. This should not be driven by the pharmaceutical industry or by vested interests. At the national level, there is also a need to remove the dichotomous control over drugs between the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers and the Ministry of Health. Although alluded to in various reports, India is yet to establish a single reporting authority for all drug-policy issues. The Drug Control Department has to ensure that good-quality essential drugs are made available to the people. Spurious and sub-standard drugs should be totally eliminated from the market.

Law and Ethics

Illegal determination of sex of the foetus and the resulting female foeticide are continuing. This is still a cause for concern in view of the already low sex ratio. Also, trading in organ transplantation where the rich exploit the poor by purchasing kidneys is an illegal and inhuman practice. There is an urgent need to strengthen the Prenatal Diagnostics Act and the Organ Transplant Act. In addition, the issue of unlawful practices by unqualified people (quacks) needs to be looked into. The four basic principles of ethics—beneficence (doing good), non-maleficence (doing no harm), autonomy to the patient in decision-making, and justice (social justice and non-discrimination)—need to be stressed both in medical bodies and during medical education.

Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy

A large part of our population uses Indian

systems of medicine, homeopathy and other alternate systems of healing to meet their needs. A variety of community-based local health cultures also exist. But budget allocation and support to these systems and traditions is very meagre. The role of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) and other traditions in effectively combating chronic diseases that are refractory, non-life-threatening and often disabling, is important. ISM&H has been providing health care at grass-roots level for several years. Its importance has been recognized and the Department of ISM&H was separated from the Department of Health and Family Welfare in 1972 itself. There is an urgent need to review the problems that prevent widespread access to ISM&H, undertake remedial measures and revitalize these systems in order to offer a range of safe, cost-effective, curative, and preventive therapies. Promotion of herbal gardens at the village level and popularization of ISM&H will go a long way in empowering people to deal with routine health problems in a simple and cost-effective way.

Health Research

In spite of a rich culture of scientific enquiry in the history of India, there has been a long period of stagnation in health research. Although the country boasts of close to 200 universities and thousands of colleges, opportunities for and scope of research are limited. In fact, this has resulted in the huge migration of Indian scientific talent to the United States and elsewhere, and they have made notable contri-

butions to science and technology there. The numerous research institutions in the public sector, like the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), need to be strengthened. There is gross inequity in the world with regard to research: 5% is spent on health problems of the developing countries and 95% on the health problems of the developed countries.

Future Health Scenario

It is not all a bleak scenario for health care in India. We have a huge network of primary health centres and health workers with a strong commitment towards health for all. Some of the states have brought out progressive health-sector reforms. The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, was himself on the WHO Commission for Macroeconomics and Health. One of the prominent outcomes was the paradigm shift from the concept that economic progress will automatically lead to health to the realization that economic development is inextricably linked to health. There was also a recommendation for doubling spending on health from the present dismal 0.9% to a more realistic 2-3% of the GDP. The recently launched National Rural Health Mission has incorporated the social aspects of health into policy, and seeks to involve the community in health care. Such a social model for health has long been sought for. These are indeed good tidings for the health-care scenario. Although India may have been late to capitalize on the industrial revolution, information technology and space technology have been mainstreamed into development in a unique fashion. Today, Indian doctors provide tele-radiology services to various developed countries. CT and MRI scans done in American hospitals are being analysed in Bangalore and reports sent back in 30 minutes! The tele-medicine revolution has spread far and wide into remote areas of north-eastern India, the Andamans and Lakshadweep. The telemedicine unit in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka is providing expert cardiac care to many rural areas in the district. Some private hospitals





Community-health sensitivity:
Needs to be cultivated at school level

are also attracting foreign patients for treatment and provide good-quality care at reasonable costs.

Public-Private (NGO) Partnership

This is now a proven model for complementing the skills and experiences of voluntary organizations with the wide outreach of the government. Various models both within the health sector and outside have demonstrated this. The government needs to remove hurdles in the way of implementing such partnerships in the health sector. Even before the public health services could reach many remote areas, there were many individuals and NGOs who had reached out to these remote corners. In view of their commitment and passion, the work done has been of high quality and has further inspired many others to take up a similar path. The Ramakrishna Mission has done tremendous work in various sectors—health, education, and women's welfare—in rural and tribal areas. The Mission today has a network of 15 hospitals with over 2,000 beds and 120 dispensaries, 46 mobile medical units, 5 nurses' training schools and 2 old age homes. In addition, care of pregnant and nursing mothers is ongoing. Education to the girl child has been identified as a priority. Numerous individuals have drawn inspiration from the work of the Mission. The next step would be to proceed from hospital-based health care to community-based

primary health care with more emphasis on preventive, promotive and rehabilitative aspects.

In fact, it was the man-making and nation-building teachings of Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission that inspired me to begin work with the Soligas of BR Hills, and the Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra that was formed in 1979 today stands as a pillar of tribal development. The Kendra has now progressed from curative to preventive health, and from there to community health and sustainable development. The Karuna Trust was begun with integrated rural development as its goal. The trust today runs 20 'model' primary health centres with the larger mission statement of running one model primary health centre in each district of the state. This is indeed a unique model of public-private partnership. In collaboration with Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), the PHCs are being transformed into Village Resource Centres wherein space technology is used to provide telemedicine, tele-education, farmer advisories, e-governance schemes and natural resource management information to the villages. Various issues of health security are being addressed—the farmers' insurance scheme of Yashaswini, Arogya Raksha and the Karuna Trust-UNDP model of community health insurance are a few examples. The Vivekananda Foundation, a federation of 13 voluntary organizations in Karnataka, is doing excellent work in remote parts of the state. SEWA-Rural of Jhagadia, Gujarat, and several other organizations inspired by the Ramakrishna Mission's ideals are rendering excellent service to the poor. They have come out with several innovative approaches to health care.

On the whole, primary health care has emerged as an important tool to deliver quality health care to the people. Good governance practices and adoption of successful models by NGOs coupled with policy changes to strengthen the institution of primary health care will go a long way in improving the health of the nation.

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The Military in Contemporary India: A Commentary

GENERAL (RETD) SHANKAR ROYCHOWDHURY

Military forces are one of the most essential components of sovereign governance. Along with territory and population they constitute a vital cornerstone of the national structure and provide the ultimate option available to the state in protecting its citizens and way of life against external and internal challenges. They are required to be apolitical in their support of the system of governance and not expropriate the process to themselves.

India has a cultural and social continuum of over five thousand years, but its present geopolitical incarnation as a sovereign republic is of comparatively recent origin, dating back to 15 August 1947. India's defence forces have a history longer than that of the republic they serve, having been established by the British East India Company in the eighteenth century, continuing thereafter as the Indian Army of the British Crown after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, to which were later added the Indian Navy and Air Force, and finally, after Partition and Independence on 15 August 1947, serving the nation as the Army, Navy, and Air Force of the Union of India.

Performance and Perceptions

The three services are the nation's first line of defence, and one of the few institutions in the country of acknowledged international excellence. Their primary role is protection of the nation and its people against external aggression, while their secondary role is to function within the country in aid of civil authority for the maintenance of security, law and order, and being of assistance during major natural calamities. The soldier, sailor, and airman spring from the society to which they belong, and to

which they return after completing their service. They are citizens in uniform, generally seen in their more visible primary role as warriors preserving the unity, integrity and well-being of the country. Society associates them with its own safety and security. The armed forces are an extension of society but nevertheless possess a certain special identity and mystique. Their ultimate success depends on the warmth, support, and respect they are accorded by fellow citizens.

In an unstable national and international environment where hostile external stimuli often seek to initiate internal instability, as at present, nation-building, national integration, and national preservation become the primary responsibilities of the armed forces which brings them into close and frequent contact with the rest of society. They provide the country with the largest, best organized and most highly motivated agencies, and play a very major role in disaster management and internal stability operations, known in military jargon as Operations Other than War (OOW).

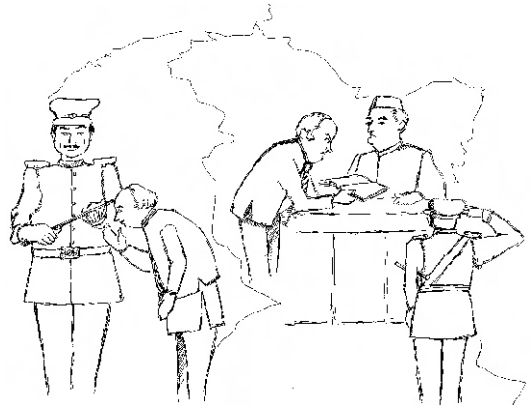
The courage, dedication and energy displayed on these occasions has made every soldier, sailor, and airman, officer as well as the rank and file, a role model in the public perception as well as one of its most superb ambassadors abroad. They are seen as Team India, though at a different and far more critical level of national affairs, and the nation willingly accords them star status along with almost total and uninhibited support on all occasions. In a rapidly changing society, they are widely perceived as the last bastion of traditionally cherished values like propriety, honesty, discipline and patriotism, which are seen to be disinte-

grating elsewhere while the citizenry watch, often in helpless anguish and frustration.

This instinctive and freely given trust bestows an awesome responsibility on the recipients and requires constant hard effort to live up to, making even minor slippages and blemishes that much more difficult to reconcile. In an age of free, intrusive and often irresponsibly iconoclastic media, snap allegations as in the Bofors case, the Tehelka sting, defence purchases during the Kargil War, reports of fake killings and other unsavoury episodes are often purveyed to the public in a tendentious, inaccurate and speculative manner by ignorant, half-informed, or downright malicious junior stringers of the media desperate to score in the cut-throat competition to publish bad news. Negative impressions, true or false, once created in the public mind are difficult to dispel, and the smoke tends to linger even when the truth unearthed after investigation proves to be totally opposite to what was trumpeted earlier. Meanwhile, the idols are seen to have feet of clay. This is a difficult situation for the armed forces, who are sensitive about their professional reputation and uncomfortable with any kind of gap between themselves and the people.

The Armed Forces vis-a-vis the Politicians and Bureaucracy

However, though important enough in its own time and place, interaction between the armed forces, society and the media can only be mere window dressing, much of such interaction being of necessity superfluous. The real working environment of the country's military lies in the hard inner world of statecraft and the processes of governance, to which the public cannot be privy. It is here that the true place of the soldier in the interests of the nation becomes really apparent in terms of the space and weightage accorded to the views of the armed forces on issues affecting the security of the country. And it is precisely here that political and bureaucratic India grossly slights its armed forces.



Balance of power?

Perhaps in no other contemporary system of governance anywhere else in the world have the armed forces been so completely disassociated from the decision-making loop on matters of national security which ultimately affect the well-being of the country and its citizens and often demand from the soldiers—themselves citizens of India—the ultimate sacrifice. The roots of this bizarre attitudinal aberration are partly politico-historical and partly personality-oriented. In the first case, the total credit for the achievement of independence was appropriated exclusively by Mahatma Gandhi and his anointed political acolytes in the Congress, and projected as the exclusive victory of the strategy they espoused of non-violence and non-cooperation. The alternative path of armed struggle adopted by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with its strong military manifestations was systematically devalued, not only on account of conflict of philosophies, but also of the earlier political contention between Netaji and the Mahatma Gandhi faction, which ultimately monopolized the glory as well as the fruits of independence.

Netaji and his Azad Hind Fauj followed the traditions established by a host of warrior-patriots from the Rani of Jhansi and the sepoys of 1857 to the freedom fighters of the Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar Dal. Whatever the military effectiveness and ultimate achievements of the Azad Hind Fauj, their very appear-

ance on the battlefield created a psychological pressure point on the exhausted and war-weary British Empire, which was fearful of a possible second Sepoy Mutiny in the Indian Army, then returning home after the end of the Second World War. Added to this was Jawaharlal Nehru's personal philosophy of vehement, sometimes irrational, anti-militarism, which strongly influenced his perceptions and conduct of statecraft as the prime minister. He gave short shrift to the role of the military in affairs of national security, and was reluctant to acknowledge or accept that the military had a legitimate contribution in such matters. He eulogized Ashoka and Akbar in *Glimpses of World History*, but in spite of his undoubted and considerable erudition, could not analyse and appreciate that both Buddhism and Din Ilahi could be effectively propagated in part because their chief proponents presided over empires of unchallenged military capability. Jawaharlal Nehru preached Panchsheel and non-alignment, but failed to take appropriate lessons from history that a truly independent geo-strategy required, apart from economic strength, strong military capabilities as well.

Notwithstanding the early experiences of deploying the Indian Army and Air Force to retain Kashmir, Hyderabad and later Goa within the nation, the system consciously relegated the armed forces to the role of bystanders in matters of national security and did not include them in the process of statecraft. There was always a reluctance to give due consideration to inputs from the uniformed services, even in areas which were their primary and legitimate concern, and resultantly the country suffered a series of humiliating geo-strategic mishaps ranging from the premature referral of the Kashmir issue to the UN in 1947 to the military reverses of the Sino-Indian border war of 1962. That the old mindset persisted under successive prime ministers in the post-Nehru era as well was again demonstrated by the total exclusion of the armed forces from the entire process of development of nuclear weapons, right down

to the Pokhran explosions of 1998. So it would not be incorrect to claim that whereas the people of India have nothing but unreserved affection and respect for the armed forces, the political system and its attendant bureaucracy keep them at arm's length on many vital matters.

Recruitment and Training

Each branch of the military functions in its own primary environment—the Army on land, the Navy on the seas, and the Air Force in the skies—and is oriented accordingly. But their respective capabilities can be developed to maximum effect only when they function in total synergy with each other, an aspect whose vital importance can never be emphasized enough. It is also important to appreciate that even in the milieu of the highest technologies of the twenty-first century, the soldier still remains the ultimate weapon. The centrality of human resources—soldiers, sailors, and airmen, officers and the rank and file—remains unchanged, and forms the bedrock for all other functions.

India, unlike many countries, has an all-volunteer defence force comprised of citizens who join of their own volition and not as conscripts called upon to render national service in the armed forces by the law of the land. With a population of over one billion there is no dearth of excellent human material in the country, but in a growing economy and slowly spreading prosperity the armed forces today have to compete in the marketplace for the best quality, and perhaps are not among the most attractive or sought after of career options.

The men and women of the armed forces come from all parts of the country in an extraordinarily diverse yet uniquely homogenous body, representative of the complex society from which they come. Entry is open to all who meet the prerequisite physical, educational and psychological standards, irrespective of ethnicity, region, religion or language. As a matter of side interest, the Navy and Air Force take the gold and silver medals inter se as career prefer-

ences among the three services, while the Army has to be content with a bronze—a fairly accurate and revealing gradation of the realities of life in each service in terms of difficult field conditions, physical discomfort and possibility of physical casualty by enemy action, climate, or accident.

Traditionally, intake in the rank and file generally has more of a rural profile, while the officer cadre has a more urban colour. This is an aspect which requires to be reviewed. Urban youth, being more exposed to the seductions of consumerism, generally turn away from physically demanding careers. Their rural and small-town counterparts are more enthusiastic and motivated in this respect, though relatively lacking in social sophistication, which is often mistaken for military aptitude. Perhaps more attention needs to be paid by the military recruiting organization to this aspect. The soldier in the ranks is recruited through the military recruiting organization at the average age of around nineteen years, and after achieving the minimum educational qualification of class ten (class eight for certain communities where access to education has been relatively less). There is also a fairly sizeable proportion in the rank and file of those who achieve higher levels as well, but the general standard of education is as yet mediocre and has to be supplemented with extensive in-house training after recruitment.

The Army recruits undergo rigorous basic training at a number of Regimental Centres while the Air Force and Navy have their own institutions for imparting basic training. Here, in addition to professional military skills, recruits learn to bond within the organization, actively developing camaraderie, self-esteem and pride, *esprit de corps*, and loyalty to their regiments, to the service and the uniform, and above all to the country. The supreme importance of *Nam, Namak, Nishan* (loosely translated as 'Honour, Faith, and Country') as a concept to fight and, if necessary, die for, is actively fostered in them throughout their service. Officers are recruited through a range of examinations conducted by

the Union Public Service Commission for a wide variety of entries at various ages and academic levels, all ultimately culminating in either Permanent Regular or Short Service Commissions in the three services. The institutions for pre-commission training include the National Defence Academy at Khadakwasla near Pune, the Military, Naval and Air Force Academies at Dehra Dun, Goa, and Begumpet (near Secunderabad) respectively, and the Officers' Training Academy at Chennai for men and women Short Service entrants.

The Enlightened Soldier

Soldiering is an earthy profession and the philosophical theme of enlightenment is perhaps too abstruse for contemplation in such a context. But what is indeed imperative is the achievement of awareness among soldiers—awareness of themselves as individuals, as citizens of the country, of the compulsions and dilemmas of their profession, and, transcending all else, of their duties, responsibilities, values and code of conduct as members of the armed forces of the nation. This is what military training constantly seeks to impart. But the soldier is also a citizen and a member of society coming from countless cities, towns and villages throughout the country. With society, therefore, lies the onerous responsibility of imparting to him the initial knowledge and awareness of citizenship, with its duties and responsibilities, and the resultant rights they confer on the individual. The traditional societal institutions which have to undertake this are the family and the school, which are now themselves staggering under multiple traumas of social, economic and political malaise. Thus, by the time the potential soldier comes of age and becomes available for induction into the military and its world, his personality and character will have already been moulded to a large extent by the socio-economic environment of his origins, and his character, values and social orientation already established to a large extent. It is only at this stage that the task of remoulding him phys-

ically and professionally as well as socially, morally and psychologically into a soldier can commence.

A great deal of effort has to be devoted to motivation and development, and to issues of military ethos and culture, incorporating unquantifiables like discipline, morale, pride and self-esteem within its scope. Soldiers require to be highly motivated. There has to be a great emphasis on the development of a high degree of mental resilience through a positive military culture based on moral and spiritual value systems. The services live and function in harmony of creed, culture and class—a model of India as it should be but unfortunately is not. Though inextricably connected with the masses, the military work culture and value system need to be insulated to the extent possible from the corrosive impact of perverse moral and political malignancies that have taken deep roots in the contemporary social environment. It is primarily for this reason that the military attempts to seclude itself in cantonments and military stations, where it attempts to maintain a culture and environment that is actually quite unrepresentative of the prevailing social realities and value systems of the outside world. So the perceived exclusiveness and seclusion of military areas from the general public, though seen as a manifestation of isolationism, is in many ways a defensive functional imperative.

The Regimental System

It is a historical anomaly, but nevertheless borne out by experience, that under the intense physical and psychological pressures of war, politically and socially divisive issues like ethnicity and religion are also some of the most effective motivating factors for soldiers. This was understood by the British, who gave them formal recognition in their traditional system of 'county regiments' by recruitment of soldiers on a domicile basis. Some of these regiments dated back to the seventeenth century and were organized around socially homogenous fighting units. It was experienced that these were easier

to administer, train, and, above all, motivate in combat by invoking local traditions of regional history and folklore. When British rule in India was restored in 1858 after the failure of the Sepoy Mutiny, the armies of the East India Company were transferred to the Crown and the old Presidency armies of the Company Bahadur (the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras armies) were marched off into history.

The Sepoy Mutiny was confined almost solely to the old Bengal Army, composed largely of troops recruited in Avadh and Bihar. The British won the day with massive assistance and support of native reinforcements from other parts of India, notably the Punjab and the Northwest Frontier, as well as from the Gurkhas of Nepal. The British regimental system was modified for India and its cardinal principle of 'class composition' transplanted into the reorganized Indian Army during this period. It was a sophisticated system of social engineering designed to minimize the likelihood of a second Sepoy Mutiny as far as was humanly possible. 'Martial classes' based on religion and ethnicity were created and the new Indian regiments were designated after the British custom by regions of recruitment (Punjab Regiment), classes enlisted (Rajput Regiment), and, in two instances, by religion (Sikh Regiment and Sikh Pioneers). It was also considered prudent to group sub-units of different religious denominations within a single unit, for example, a Sikh and a Hindu sub-unit along with one or more Muslim sub-units. Apart from the purely military aspects of administration, training, unit cohesion and combat motivation, regional and communal fealty, which had come forward to assist the British in putting down the Mutiny, was recognized under this system and rewarded by employment in the Army, which was the ultimate symbol of Britain's imperial authority. Privileged classes were thus created, with vested interests in preserving British authority. The designation of 'martial classes' also created a spirit of regional exclusiveness deliberately fostered to reduce the pos-

sibility of focal points in any future dissidence.

Whatever the original thought processes behind introduction of the regimental system in the Indian Army, at the functional level it undoubtedly created a unique fighting machine, optimally geared to militarily utilize the country's prevalent social system. The heart of the system was, as always, high-grade leadership exercised initially through a British officer corps which totally identified itself with the interests and welfare of the troops it commanded. These British officers, though belonging to a totally alien culture, involved themselves heart and soul in their task and over the years created a strong tradition of personal leadership and close rapport with the men they commanded, getting to know almost every nuance of the different religions, languages, and social customs. Later, under the compulsions for rapid expansion during the Second World War, many young Indians were commissioned into all three services, and they strongly imbibed the command culture of the British, including its many definitely positive aspects. Overall, the process developed an Army with unsurpassed bonding and unit cohesion that performed well in battle.

The same culture of leadership was transferred to the Royal Indian Navy and Royal Indian Air Force, as these progressively came into existence, and established the archetypal role model of the Indian military officer which has still been preserved in independent India's present-day Army, Navy and Air Force. Given the high standards of leadership, it is small wonder that these Indian regiments served the British well on far-flung battlefields—from Afghanistan, Burma and China during the expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, through Europe, North Africa and the Far East in the First and Second World Wars in the twentieth, right up to the trauma of Partition and their subsequent division into the armed forces of the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The old Indian Army had

developed a proud, enviable and enduring tradition of valour and direct leadership in its officer cadre—many of whom were Indians by now—which accompanied it during the transmigration into independence and proved a priceless asset for the new republic. In fact, the regimental system, modified for a secular republican India, is one of the reasons for the uniformly distinguished performance of the Army in particular.

Unique Ethos

Command of troops in the Indian armed forces follows a unique 'management model' that demands direct, up-front leadership, the highest standards of personal integrity, physical and moral courage, and impartiality, along with professional efficiency and absolute concern for troops. This command philosophy is reflected in the credo taught to officer cadets at the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun: 'The safety, welfare and honour of the country comes first, always and every time. The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command comes next. Your own ease, welfare and comfort come last, always and every time.'

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose gave this motto to the Azad Hind Fauj: *Itmad, Ittehad, Qurbani* ('Confidence, Unity, Sacrifice'). It was a spirited exhortation to the nation propagated through the first soldiers of free India, but generally ignored after freedom was attained. In some ways, it is indeed a pity that it is only in the defence services that Netaji's message, though not officially proclaimed or promulgated, has been adopted and practised in letter and spirit right down to the present day. The symbolism of 'Jai Hind' as a routine daily greeting or *Qadam qadam barhaye ja* played on a military band seems perfectly normal in an armed-forces setting. It is a sad commentary on the state of the nation that fifty-eight years after independence, they sound awkward and anomalous when articulated elsewhere in our society.

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Enlightened Policing

ARVIND S INAMDAR

When Swami Yogatmanandaji telephoned me on behalf of *Prabuddha Bharata*, requesting me to write an article on 'Enlightened Policing', I was startled. I have been associated with the police for more than four decades, but rarely have I heard of such a topic. It appears simple, but no two words are more contradictory! With apologies to John Keats, I would say:

Much have I travelled in the realm of gangsters
And many killings and crimes have I seen
But in such quandary I have rarely been.

I should have said a polite no to Yogatmanandaji, but our upbringing and traditions enjoin upon us to obey sadhus, parents, elders and good souls. In addition to this, it is part of our khaki culture to say yes even when we want to shout No!—and land ourselves in trouble.

In any case, we policemen are not known for thinking; rather, there is a scarcity of thinking policemen. To meet, or even to find, an enlightened policeman—nay, even an enlightened government servant—is very rare. Only a very small percentage of policemen can be called humane, honest, responsible or duty-conscious, let alone enlightened. That would be as good as coming across a vegetarian tiger or a warbling crow or a docile wolf. I do not know if they are being over-hunted or have lost their habitat, but they have certainly become a rare species and, if not protected, will soon become extinct.

The bizarre stories of police corruption, insensitivity, brutality and involvement in heinous crimes regularly make the headlines. In Mumbai, a couple of cops were dismissed for their addiction to alcohol and involvement in sexual offences. In New Delhi, our capital, women do not feel safe after sunset. In Bihar,

law and order is so delicate and the atmosphere so violent that assembly polls cannot be held at one go but need to be spread over more than a month. These things were unheard of only fifteen or twenty years ago. Naxalites have spread their violent activities over more than a dozen states and killed hundreds of policemen. Every year over a thousand policemen and officers sacrifice their lives in the line of duty. The once cool Kashmir is burning. Not a day passes without loss of lives or bomb explosions. Crime has raised its ugly head everywhere. Extremists have audaciously attacked the Lok Sabha itself and caused a bloodbath. Not a single zone of the country is free from the menace of terrorism. Only a few days ago the state of Bihar was seen to be totally impotent when a thousand-strong Naxalites, with slogans on their lips and guns in their hands, ran over Jehanabad town, cut off its power supply and stormed the jail—à la Bastille—with amazing ease, freeing over 350 prisoners and killing some of their arch-enemies.

The might of the state is being challenged, and this is no mean challenge. It is not only tearing the fabric of law and order, but seriously threatening our development and welfare dreams. I had never seen nor had I ever imagined such a scenario when I joined the police force forty years ago. The economy may be booming, but crime is also thriving. Anarchy is just round the corner. And the army cannot be expected to solve our internal problems. So the responsibility and pressure on our police have increased tremendously. But are they competent?

Though some sort of crude and elementary system of dealing with offences and offenders has always existed in India from ancient times, progressing from spies to kotwals, the police force as we see it today came into existence in 1861 when the Police Act was passed

by the British government. Prior to that, law mainly consisted of arbitrary commands given by rulers, kings and emperors. One of the chief causes of the advent of British rule in India was the widespread lawlessness in the country. People were fed up with the thugs and dacoits, their extortions, robberies, abductions and murders. It was a ruffian raj with only a semblance of peace.

It must be noted that the necessity of organized policing was felt very acutely in England also. The famous Scotland Yard was formed in 1829 to thwart graft, blackmail, and serious and violent crimes that were then rampant. Even during that early time, in London alone there were 8,000 places where stolen goods were exchanged, 30,000 people who lived by thieving and 5,000 people who had been brought up in an atmosphere of systematic crime! If such were the conditions in the capital of England, where law was already codified, one can well imagine the conditions in a vast country like India. The rising of 1857 was just over. The British were shaken to their roots, and law and order became their number-one priority. They felt the need of systematic policing and the outcome was the creation of an Indian police force.

However, India's police force has all along been an indigenous product responding to the country's changing conditions and aspirations under the influence of modern science and Western ways of thinking. It was raised on the firm foundation of law and would not be an agent of an autocratic government. It would be governed and controlled only by the law of the land, which was equally binding on citizen and ruler alike, and as such, it would be an integral part of the country's civic life.

After Scotland Yard came into being, within a very short time London became a safe metropolis. The bobby was recognized all over the world as a cultured, disciplined, effective and honest policeman. In India too, soon after the passing of the Indian Penal Code, Evidence Act and Police Act, such was the awe of law that it is said people could safely travel from their native villages to far-off places of pilgrimage on

foot, horseback or bullock cart with a lump of gold tied to the end of their stick.

Still, the British never gave us a model police force; they never wanted to, for that would cost them money. But in spite of being underpaid, undermanned, ill trained, overworked, ridiculed and generally taken for granted, the loyalty, honesty and courage of those policemen were remarkable. There were two reasons for this: the rulers hardly interfered with the law, and the police force was led by some of the most distinguished and inspired officers, both Imperial and Indian. I am sure that if justice is ever done at the bar of history, the contribution of those officers and men will be remembered with very deep gratitude. They helped modernize India, they strengthened the fabric of law and order. They were citizens in uniform, entrusted by their fellow citizens with the powers necessary to preserve peace and order. The powers were exercised with a great sense of responsibility and within the framework of the law.

The contributions of stalwarts like Sir Charles Napier (who introduced systematic policing in Sind), Col Sleeman (who eradicated thuggee), Sir Frank Souter (whose bust an old constable was seen smartly saluting even twenty years after his retirement!), Mr Beaty (who inspired Rudyard Kipling to write *Kim*), Sir David Petrie of the Intelligence Bureau and Mr Handy of the Frontier Constabulary, whom ponies followed like dogs, and several others can never be forgotten. They were all minutely just and scrupulously honest. It was they who laid the foundation of the Indian police force and kept the police flag flying. They infused the entire force with a sense of pride, which was no mean achievement considering that the policemen had to brave lakhs of armed Congress volunteers and revolutionaries.

Even after Independence, for the first two or three decades the performance of the police was quite good in spite of the new rulers' lukewarm attitude towards it and the grudge they bore against it. The new leaders, mostly brought up in Congress culture, instinctively disliked

the police and just tolerated it. They hardly paid any attention to its problems, training, equipment or morale, and only indulged in giving the members of the force long hollow lectures on how to behave with the public. The only exception was Sardar Patel, who was a visionary and appreciated the necessity of efficient policing in modern India. Law and order is a must for progress and peace, and we cannot have law and order without an effective police force. No nation can function without a police force.

Disaster awaited us. Sooner than our leaders imagined, India was facing gangsters, drug lords, extremists and terrorists armed to the teeth. In addition to dealing with them, the police had to investigate complicated scams of immense proportions involving greedy, dishonest and power-hungry politicians. Throwing the principles of good governance to the winds, these politicians deliberately encouraged divisive forces and joined hands with criminals in order to win elections or stay in power. In such critical situations brilliant officers like K F Rustamji (BSF founder), B N Mullick (IB chief), M K Sinha (Bihar DGP), S S Jog (Maharashtra DGP), F V Arul (Tamil Nadu DGP), J F Ribeiro (Punjab DGP) and K P S Gill (who broke the back of terrorism in Punjab) did their best to keep the police professional, competent and task-oriented. To maintain law and order in such a divisive and unprincipled society is a challenge mightier than that faced during the British Raj. In spite of the sickening social climate, thanks largely to the disgusting intrigues and frustrating interference of some devilish politicians, if the writ of law still runs in the land, it is because the common citizen wants it—and because there are still some honest, impartial and humane policemen around. But their number is fast dwindling.

Sadly, the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service have not remained insulated. Corruption and politics have badly corroded them. Instead of bringing our self-serving politicians to book, they have chosen

softer options, although they enjoy several constitutional guarantees, decent pay, assured service prospects and perks, besides being held in great respect by the people. If politicians have become man-eaters, we policemen have turned wolves. Of course, there are notable exceptions.

Prior to Independence, people in the Indian Civil Service (Indian Police) were absolutely just and honest, but today a majority of them are just the reverse. There is neither fear of law nor fear of superiors. The politicization of the police and bureaucracy is taking place rapidly and the criminalization of politics is almost complete! It is largely true that nowadays our police only go after the common man; they dare not touch the high and mighty. Many top officers involved in big corruption cases and mind-boggling scams have been arrested and remanded to police custody, but the actual effect is very little. Years pass before their cases are decided, by which time everybody will have forgotten all about them. So much for our criminal justice system.

After Independence many of us fondly believed that our government would find solutions to our problems. But now we have come to feel that the government is itself our problem! One of the most obvious issues India is facing is bad governance. Since the solution of the problem would go against their vested interests, our politicians try to distract people's attention by raising relatively minor matters like caste and religion. Not one of them is really bothered about pressing problems like population explosion, indiscipline, corruption and unemployment. In fact, corruption has become a low-risk, high-income business. People perceive bureaucrats and policemen as agents of state exploitation rather than as providers of service. The day dacoits and gangsters entered the legislature, the authors of our constitution must have shuddered in heaven! The sanctity of these houses has been lost.

It is evident that our national ship is in grave danger. Something is seriously wrong with her compass and her crew. We expected a

pleasant voyage after the rosy dawn of independence, but now find ourselves on turbulent waters in ever-deepening gloom. The question that haunts us all is: What is the remedy? They are many, but as far as I am concerned, it is 'enlightened policing'.

'Enlightened' is an adjective usually associated with Buddha. It is described as 'a feeling of pure joy' rising up unbidden in one's heart when the ego is obliterated. In this sublime state Buddha found solutions to the fundamental questions of human life. Everything that Buddha taught was positive. The Mahabharata also enumerates eight marks of an enlightened person: nobility, bravery, good sense, scholarship, restraint in speech, charity, austerity and gratitude. None of these virtues is easy to practise, but passivity and escapism are not our aims.

Swami Vivekananda used to say that Vedanta teaches strength and fearlessness. Sri Krishna exhorted Arjuna not to yield to unmanliness in battle. This calls for strength and human excellence. Excellence is yoga, says the Gita. We will have the power to resist weakening temptations so long as we remain strong. So our first objective is to become strong. We may not become proof against evil right away, but strength of character will enable us to face it with poise and experience peace amidst suffering. Thus we learn to develop grace under stress.

This is all very well, but for an ordinary policeman who is controlled by politicians it is a tall order. Strength of the type described above is hard to attain even for yogis, what to speak of the ill-trained, ill-paid, ill-treated policeman. We need to tackle the problem of national degeneration at its root—our corrupt leaders. Otherwise, we will be like the blind led by people who are themselves blind. *Yatha raja tatha praja*, says the proverb.

Gandhijis and Patels are not our crying need. What we need is just honest, determined and visionary men and women. Our country does not deserve to be ruled by robbers and gangsters. Nobody has a right to abuse and exploit this great nation. If only our educated

middle class wakes up, we could start a second mass movement for independence—independence from villainous politicians. A handful of people who believe in themselves, and are willing to sacrifice themselves, make all the difference. Only such people can lead others, and they are what India now needs.

Unless and until changes are made in the law that will enable the police to successfully bring criminals to justice, the problem of lawlessness will remain. But as it appears now, the police themselves seem to be standing trial, both within and without. Outside, there is public criticism of their bad behaviour, and inside, their morale has touched an all-time low. Once upon a time it was a privilege to serve in the police force, but now being a policeman is almost a disgrace—all because of their connection with criminals and politicians. So how to insulate the police from corruption is the question.

The answer has to come from within. If police officers get united and decide to say a firm no to illegal orders, it will certainly be possible to turn the tide. IPS officers, especially, should lead by example; they must have the necessary honesty, determination, unity and will. Today many of the inspectors are double graduates and most of the constabulary is graduate. They are sensitive and learn from their superiors. It confuses them when they see honest members of the force punished and bad elements rewarded. To enlighten them and keep them on the right track is indeed a daunting task, though not an impossible one. The solution is to produce competent, professional and humane policemen who have faith in themselves and respect for their mission of service. They must know that they are lions, and shake off the delusion that they are sheep. That is enlightenment.

Says the Vachana: 'What indeed is true wisdom?/ Not learning the Gita by rote,/ Nor chanting the Vedas complete./ It is being more than knowing,/ It is an active life of service,/ It is courage in the face of death,/ O Lord Kudalasangama.'

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Corruption in Public Services

JUSTICE N VENKATACHALA

Corruption: A Global Problem

Rampant corruption among public servants of developing countries who are using their public offices for private gains and not delivering the services meant for infrastructural and human development, which are very much required by those countries to reach the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015, has become a matter of common concern.

Corruption, however, has always existed among public servants all over the world. Indeed, the rampant corruption that existed among public servants of the powerful Roman Empire became solely responsible for its decline and fall, as emphatically stated by the famous British historian, Edward Gibbon. And in the United States it did not come to an end till the end of the nineteenth century, as pointed out by the Illinois senator, Paul H Douglas, in his book on *Ethics of Government*.

Corruption in India

Corruption among government servants in India, however, reached its peak during the Second World War, between the years 1939 and 1945, when thousands of crores of rupees were spent by the government through them in the course of its immense war effort. When India gained its freedom in 1947, its selfless freedom fighters and intellectuals were totally opposed to the idea of free India being ruled by an individual or a coterie. They were apprehensive that absolute political power, if placed in the hands of a small group of individuals, would make them absolutely corrupt, and that corruption would end up in India losing its freedom once again. Indeed, it was this apprehension that made Indians adopt, enact and give to themselves a constitution as early as 1949. India

was thus constituted into a sovereign, democratic republic of the people, by the people and for the people. The avowed goal of the constitution is to secure for all citizens, through rule of law alone, not merely political but also social and economic justice.

No doubt some of the popular governments that have come to power at the Centre and in the states from time to time, through elections based on adult franchise, have undertaken programmes that have resulted in considerable progress in agriculture, industry, science and technology, transport, communications, health, sanitation, education, housing and other sectors. Even so, India has not been able to get over the dubious distinction of being one of the most corrupt countries of the world, as can be seen from the Corruption Perception Index of 145 countries prepared by the Berlin-based Transparency International in 2004.

According to the index for India for 2005, employees belonging to just 11 government public-service sectors have extracted from 14,405 citizens spread across 20 states as much as Rs 21,068 crore in one year as bribe or speed money for the services to which those citizens are entitled! People in the country's school education, police, land administration and subordinate judiciary sectors are shown by the index to be the most corrupt, in that order.

This menace of corruption among government servants is increasing



Effect of company?

in India, as can be seen from the scams and scandals that surface almost on a daily basis. But for this, India would undoubtedly have had by now a fully developed infrastructure; it would have wiped out poverty, disease and illiteracy among its poor and deprived sections, and become a developed country, ready to help other developing countries in their own development.

Need for Political Will to Fight Corruption

If Gladstone could eradicate corruption among British public servants, and if Lee Kuan Yew could do the same in Singapore, it would not be so difficult for an Indian prime minister to replicate it in our country. All that is necessary is a little political will. It is India's great misfortune that none of its prime ministers has sincerely tried to eradicate government corruption, when all that anyone of them had to do was get his or her party, holding a majority in Parliament, to enact the laws needed for the purpose. This should have been a simple matter, as the only requirement for getting such laws passed in Parliament is a simple majority.

For instance, Parliament has still not passed the Lokpal Bill, postponing its consideration in one form or other, even though the bill was recommended by the Administrative Reforms Committee headed by Morarji Desai way back in 1966. Though the *Benami* Transactions (Prohibition) Act 1988, aimed at forfeiture of properties improperly or illegally acquired by civil servants in the names of *benamdars*, was passed by the Parliament, it has not been executed by the central government, although all that is needed is some simple rules to put it into effect. Though the supreme court suggested to the central government to get a proper legislation made by Parliament as long ago as 1996, nothing has yet been done in that direction—even after the Law Commission prepared and submitted a draft bill. Again, under the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988, which is in effect now, in case of public servants possessing properties disproportionate to their known sources of income, it is for the prosecu-

tion to prove that the properties have been illegally acquired. The National Commission for Review of the Constitution has recommended to the government to get the act amended so as to shift the onus of proof on to the public servants themselves. This too is still to be made effective. In sharp contrast to the above instances, the Central Vigilance Commission Bill, now an act of Parliament, requires the vigilance commissioner to take prior permission of the government before investigating complaints of corruption against any senior civil servant!

It is really unfortunate that corruption, which is known to be the worst enemy of the country, it being anti-national, anti-poor and anti-development, no proper and effective action has yet been taken either by the central or by the state governments for its eradication.

The Karnataka Lokayukta Act

As to how the provisions of the Karnataka Lokayukta Act 1984 enable the Lokayukta (ombudsman), appointed thereunder, to take action against corrupt government servants in Karnataka and make them deliver the services required of them, I shall now advert to briefly.

Every public servant in Karnataka, from the chief minister down to the peon, in all governmental or quasi-governmental departments of the state, is answerable and accountable to the Lokayukta for his administrative actions. The Lokayukta Act empowers the Lokayukta to play the role of a watchdog in respect of the administrative actions of public servants. Under the act, such actions include the taking of any decision, making of any recommendation, recording of any finding and the like by them. It also includes acts of omission, such as the public servants' failure to act or wilful negligence in the course of carrying out their administrative functions. With every government servant in Karnataka becoming answerable and accountable to the Lokayukta for his illegal or wrong acts of commission or omission, any citizen can challenge such questionable administrative actions and make a complaint to the Lokayukta,

bringing charges against such government servants or seeking redress of their grievances.

Allegations made by the complainant could be (a) that the concerned person has, in discharge of his functions, made a gain for himself or for any other person, or has caused undue harm or hardship to any other person; (b) that he was actuated by personal interest, or improper or corrupt motive; (c) that he is guilty of corruption, nepotism, favouritism or lack of integrity; or (d) that he failed to act in accordance with the norms of integrity and conduct, which ought to have been followed by a government servant of the class to which he belonged.

Also, when a complainant makes a complaint that his grievance has not been redressed by the concerned authority, or when he claims to have sustained injustice as a consequence of a civil servant's maladministration, the complainant can get redressal of his grievance. A charge of maladministration could be brought against a civil servant under the Lokayukta Act when he, in the discharge of his functions, has or is purported to have taken any action, in any case, where (a) such action, or the administrative procedure or practice governing such action, was unreasonable, unjust, oppressive or improperly discriminatory; or (b) there has been wilful negligence or undue delay in taking action, or the administrative procedure or practice governing such action involved undue delay.

Therefore, whenever a complaint is made to the Lokayukta involving either an allegation or a grievance against a civil servant with regard to his administrative action, all that needs to be done by the Lokayukta is to secure or seize the office files relating to such action and examine them to find out the truth of the case. The civil servant will be made to redress the complainant's grievance, if called for, or disciplinary or penal action could be proposed against him in case of more serious offences. Investigations are conducted in open court, or on the spot, on receipt of complaints or even *suo moto*.

In fact, the power of investigation given to the Lokayukta under the Lokayukta Act pro-

vides scope for surprise visits to any governmental or quasi-governmental office in the state, entertaining spot complaints in rural districts or taluks, and redressal of grievances then and there. Where allegations of corruption are proved, the culprits become liable to removal from service as early as possible. In some minor cases, however, the Lokayukta might pardon them with a warning, if they regret their folly and make a solemn promise that they would not repeat their mistakes. But where individuals are found guilty of criminal offences, they are prosecuted according to law. Furthermore, the Lokayukta, who has supervisory and administrative control over the enforcement of the Prevention of Corruption Act, could refer certain cases to the Karnataka Lokayukta Police for suitable action.

The provisions in the Karnataka Lokayukta Act have enabled the Lokayukta not only to prevent, control and abate corruption among public servants, but also to redress the grievances that people may have against them with regard to delivery of public services. Indeed, such redressal of public grievances is being done in thousands of cases. The media's role in publicizing the work of the Lokayukta has created an awareness among the people that they have no need of taking recourse to bribes or speed money in order to obtain delivery of services from public servants. Thus siphoning of public money by government servants has been reduced to a great extent. Actions taken against employees of the Bangalore City Municipality from time to time has not only become responsible for the redressal of numerous public grievances, but also has resulted in annual savings for the municipality of at least Rs 100 crore! Implementation of this act is the reason why government corruption in Karnataka has come down considerably and people's grievances are redressed without delay.

Wider Coverage of Legislation Needed

Though the Lokayukta Act has allowed the Lokayukta to act in much the same way as

ombudsmen in other countries and be a watchdog over the functioning of government employees in Karnataka, the central and other state governments have not yet enacted similar laws with similar provisions. Such legislation is a basic desideratum for the eradication of corruption among public servants and for getting them to redress popular grievances by delivering to the public the services to which they are entitled.

It is high time that our Parliament enacted more laws needed for the eradication of corruption from public offices, in addition to the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 and Right to Information Act 2005. Our government must also become a signatory and party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to which 133 countries have already become signatories and as many as 33 countries have become parties. When the resolutions of this Convention, empowered with provisions most needed for the eradication of government cor-

ruption in the countries concerned, become international law and they are bound to serve as a most effective legal instrument across the globe, and will help ensure that public servants promptly deliver the services to which the people are entitled, thus making for human and infrastructural development in the involved countries and thereby achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. India needs to become a signatory and party to this Convention for the greater good of its own people. It is hoped that our President and Prime Minister, both of whom are known for their uncompromising stance on corruption in public offices, will immediately initiate steps in the right direction. Such a development would make it easy to root out the malaise of corruption from our country and bring about all-round national development. And that would make India a developed country by the year 2020, a future envisioned by both of them.

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Defining Corruption

One of the central problems in combating corruption is the difficulty in clearly defining the behaviours that constitute it. Five behaviours may be labelled, at different times, as corruption:

1) **Blatantly illegal acts of bribery or fraud**, in which some form of pay-off is demanded for shaping the outcome of contracts, implementation efforts, distribution systems, etc; 2) **Actions taken to secure a modest income by people paid too little or too late**, for instance, when poor teachers sell grades or require students to pay for private tutoring in order to pass a course; 3) **Actions taken to get work done in difficult circumstances**, which includes cutting corners, ignoring rules, and bypassing procedures in order to move activities forward in ways important to the success of a project or ministry initiative. What appears as corruption to some may be seen as pragmatic project management by others; 4) **Differences in cultural perspectives (e.g., gift giving)**, where it is customary and expected that gifts are given even in return for small favours. This has been used to mask corrupt practices in the guise of a cultural expectation; 5) **Behaviour resulting from incompetence or inadequacy of infrastructure**, for instance, when record-keeping systems are weak, little importance may be given to maintaining records. It may then be difficult to know whether the inability to account for money or supplies reflects deception or poor management practices.

Thoughtful, reasonable people may disagree over what constitutes corruption and may differ in their tolerance of the same. Moreover, forms most widely condemned (e.g., contract kickbacks) tend to be the least visible; and the most visible ones (e.g., private tutoring) the most widely tolerated. But effective efforts to combat corruption require clear, yet sensible, definitions of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.

—adapted from David Chapman, *Corruption and the Education Sector*

Enlightened Journalism

TARUN GOSWAMI

The Media Influence

With the passage of time the fourth estate, or the press, has not only become an important factor in democracy but is playing a major role in educating the public. Irrespective of age or qualification, the language of a large number of people is being significantly influenced by it. The general use of phrases, syntax, and idiom is often being determined by the way journalists use them. The electronic media has really made the world a global village. Just by pressing a button one gets to know the happenings in virtually any part of the globe. World-class cricket tournaments or European and South American club football can be easily watched. As a result, many children of the present generation are well posted about the clubs for which Beckham or Ronaldinho play, or what string theory is all about, or how much bamboo a giant panda consumes in a day, or who the number one in Grand Prix racing is.

It goes without saying that both electronic and print media have increased our knowledge base and have made us encyclopedias of information. Thanks to the advertisements in the media when a new product—say a new motor car or a new shaving cream or a new moisturizer or a new cell phone—is launched in the market, the manufacturer can rest assured that quite a large number of people will be able to tell their names and how to use them the very next morning. We should admit that today, knowingly or unknowingly, we are being controlled by the media. The media has made us health conscious. Because of articles that are published in the newspapers or discussions that are organized by television channels on health-related issues like heart disease, many people have stopped eating red meat and have joined health

clubs to exercise regularly. They go to doctors for periodic health check-ups and restrict their diet to the permitted amount of calories. The yoga training programme on a private television channel by Swami Ramdevji has become very popular as people want to live a disease-free life. Medical journalism too is becoming quite popular in our country these days.

None can deny the role of the media in providing information to young students to build up their careers. There was a time when young people used to read the appointments page in the newspapers and apply for jobs. There was hardly anything for students. Now there are pages where school-going children can write poems, essays or even articles on science. Recently, a student of Class VI wrote a remarkable article on string theory in the children's section of a widely circulated English daily. There are articles in newspapers, both vernacular and English, which help students select their careers. There are programmes on television where experts from different fields are invited to give talks to help students choose their careers. There are also career-counselling sessions on television, and students are immensely benefited by such programmes.

Investments is another area given special attention by the print and electronic media. There was a time when there were just a few specialized papers which provided information on share markets and other related issues. Now there are articles in general magazines giving advice to readers about blue-chip companies, where money could be profitably invested. There are tips about institutions where investment helps get income-tax benefits. Thus economic or business journalism is playing a key role in today's society.

Automobiles form another sector that was

never highlighted in newspapers even a decade ago. Now there are ten to twelve journals dealing with four- and two-wheelers, and of them two or three are of international standard. The articles published in these magazines give information not only about the vehicles but also useful tips on safe driving. There are instructions about how a car or a motorbike can be best maintained. Then there are tips on buying second-hand cars. I myself write a column for *The Statesman* on new cars and motorbikes that are launched in the market. It is amazing to see how much interest people are taking in these automobile magazines.

Real estate, promoters and builders are all terms popularized by the Indian press. Till recently, people did not know who a 'promoter' was. People used to resort to land speculators or agents to buy a plot of land or a house or a flat. Over the past few years the scenario in the metropolitan cities has changed completely. Now people are reading magazines to get more information about the land, house or flat they intend buying. They also know by reading articles which documents they should check at the time of purchase. So it is difficult to dupe a large section of educated people. Real-estate journalism is also a new addition to journalism. Magazines dealing with interior decoration too are becoming very popular. People are getting the contact numbers of experts on interior decoration. The old tradition of *vastu* has been revived by the media and people are setting up their houses and flats according to the instructions of *vastu shastra*. *Vastu* has become so popular mainly because of the media. Even the Department of Architecture, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, is teaching its students this ancient science that was followed by our ancestors.

Thus journalism has become the most important purveyor of information and its importance is fast growing with the spread of education. This surely is a very healthy sign so far as the progress of India is concerned. But it would be wrong to put on coloured glasses and see everything in pink. So far I have discussed the



'No, plain glasses, please.
Yellow doesn't work with this magazine'

positive aspect of modern Indian journalism. But there is a negative side as well. And I believe that if we can rectify the negative side then we get what is called 'enlightened journalism'.

The Darker Face of Journalism

It is most unfortunate that many of us do not want to discuss the negative side on the ground that that will pull us further down. But unless the negatives are discussed, can we remove them from our society? We all know that Swami Vivekananda was totally against any kind of negative attitude. But in several articles—'The East and the West', 'Modern India' and 'Matter for Serious Thought', for example—he criticized the negative traits of peoples and cultures with a view to encouraging positive ones. Swamiji criticized his countrymen in the harshest possible words and urged them to give up their habit of finding fault with others. India has always given argument, dialogue and discussion top priority, and I believe that only through these can we remove the negative attitudes which modern journalism has inculcated in us, whether we know it or not.

It will not be out of context to mention here that Swami Vivekananda was the first Indian to have made use of the print media to inject positive attitudes into the public mind. Swamiji had developed the concept of enlightened journalism where positive views are disseminated through articles. He started *Udbodh-*

an, the Bengali monthly of the Ramakrishna Order, over a century ago, and he wanted similar journals in other vernaculars to spread invigorating, life-giving ideas.

A major harm that the media has caused to today's Indian society is that it has set out a pattern which is held to be sacrosanct. It projects its views in such ways that there is a general feeling among the public that those who do not conform to this pattern are to be considered backward. The pattern is essentially a copy of the West and the English-educated urban population is just trying to imitate it and become 'street-smart'.

Let me give an example. Thanks to current journalism it has almost become a general notion that scientific people do not go to temples or believe in any kind of supernatural power. So if a scientist goes to a temple he is criticized for being primitive and unprogressive. The basic thrust of science is to generate inquisitiveness among people. What journalism at large is promoting is not science but technology. We often say: 'This little kid has a natural aptitude for science—he can operate a computer!' We forget that to operate a computer one has only to learn a few commands, and that has nothing to do with inquisitiveness.

Let me give you another example. It is very unfortunate that due to constant publicity in the media the younger generation living in urban India has forgotten the use of Indian dress. In educational institutions few girls are seen in saris or boys in kurtas, which was a common sight two decades ago. Even the salwar-kameez is worn by only a handful of girl students. Due to peer-group pressure students are taking to the latest fashion in trousers and tops, and those who cannot wear such dresses, either because of financial constraints or due to family pressure, often suffer from an inferiority complex. It is most surprising to see how the media is brainwashing people of all ages into believing that the so-called 'beauty products' really enhance personal appearance; so much so that it is common nowadays to see them thronging beauty

parlours—scarcely realizing that their gullibility is only filling somebody else's pockets!

But the biggest harm that modern journalism has done to our society is that it has crushed our self-confidence. Few articles are found in newspapers and few shows are seen on television that uphold the national spirit, national integration and communal harmony. On the contrary, most of them highlight the corruption, insincerity, poor work culture and indiscipline in our society. No attempt is made to try to correct the situation through positive write-ups and programmes. The positive side of the West is highlighted and its darker aspects hidden very cleverly. How selfish and lonely the westerner often is, how depression has forced a large number of Western youths to take to drugs, or how mental unrest has shattered the concept of a happy family in the West is never revealed.

All this has adverse effects on our psyche. The lack of self-confidence is affecting our social lives very badly. A person lacking self-confidence cannot lead a happy life because it produces a feeling of insecurity. This feeling of insecurity is transmitted to other members of the family, thus making the home either a fortress or a volcano, but never the sweet, happy home where others' opinions are respected and where all members live harmoniously. At the workplace, people who inwardly feel inferior to their colleagues make the environment a veritable hell. This is exactly what is happening in many offices. The boss may be highly qualified, but because of that lack of self-confidence he always tries to find a scapegoat for his own faults.

Loss of self-confidence is often a result of lack of self-respect. A man who does not respect himself, does not respect anything. This is the real reason why we backstab our friends, flout rules, yield to temptations and indulge in all sorts of pettiness. It is impossible for such people to love their motherland.

Modern journalism gives sensational news topmost priority. Here is an example. Sometime back Swami Prabhananda, the secretary of

the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Kolkata, had called a press conference in connection with the inauguration of a course on global understanding. Representatives of four newspapers covered the press conference but there was none from the electronic media. I know how difficult it is to publish stories of philanthropic activities carried out by organiza-



Service is not news

tions like the Ramakrishna Mission. A few years ago I asked the editor of a newspaper, a celebrated journalist, why a news item on the relief activities of the Ramakrishna Mission that I had filed was not carried. His reply was revealing: 'It is the duty of the Ramakrishna Mission to carry out philanthropic activities. That is not news. But if you can bring me a story about the internal problems of the monks, rest assured that it will be carried on the first page.' I was shocked, but believe me, this is a real story! Who are our celebrities? Film stars, cricket players, politicians. These days film stars and cricket players are invited to inaugurate community pujas and

corrupt politicians are requested to address seminars on values. When asked why such people are invited to do things they are obviously unsuited for, the organizers say that unless they invite such 'celebrities' the media will not provide coverage for their events.

Now, why does this happen? It happens because people with vested interests are occupying key positions in almost all professions. When such people get into journalism, they publish news items that will further their interests—and in the process they even get paid handsomely.

The Making of Conscientious Journalists

The big question that we now face is, what should be done to make journalism an enlightened profession? However, it is not only a question of journalism. In order to raise a new generation of enlightened citizens it becomes necessary to overhaul our education system as it exists now and make it value-based so as to obtain the best results. It may sound utopian, but this is the only remedy. Unless we inject good values into the body politic through the education system we will be unable to conquer the oppression of false values that are destroying our society.

The present education system has all but killed the faculty of feeling in our students and made machines of them. It has taught them that those who can earn more money are more educated. As a natural consequence, there is a mad rush to get children admitted into English-medium schools, because a good knowledge of English is thought to give them a head start over others in the race for jobs. It is a fact that many young Indians find it difficult to speak and write their own mother tongue fluently. And those who can read and speak English fluently develop, though unconsciously, some sort of indifference or disdain for those who suffer from language constraints. When a journalist goes about his work with this background he is unable to understand the aspirations and grievances of the people at large and, as a natural

consequence, fails to voice their sentiments properly.

Swamiji was fully aware of the Western wave that would hit our society. The introduction he wrote for the inaugural issue of *Udbodhan* in January 1899 is a classic example of enlightened journalism. Therein he criticized our weaknesses, cowardice and hypocrisy, cautioned us against the inrush of Western thought, and gave suggestions about how we could come out of this situation. It should always be kept in mind that in those days when most educated Indians were shamelessly copying the West, Vivekananda not only discovered the pluses of the two cultures, but also unhesitatingly stated that the intermingling and union of the two cultures would be the aim of *Udbodhan*.

About the wave of Western ideas Swamiji wrote:

... there is a great danger—lest by this huge wave of Western spirit are washed away all our most precious jewels, earned through ages of hard labour; true, there is fear lest falling into its strong whirlpool, even the land of Bharata forgets itself so far as to be turned into a battlefield in the struggle after earthly enjoyments; ay, there is fear, too, lest going to imitate the impossible and impracticable foreign ways, rooting out as they do our national customs and ideals, we lose all that we hold dear in this life and be undone in the next!¹

Swamiji then gave the most practical solution to this seemingly formidable problem. He said:

To avoid these calamities we must always keep the wealth of our own home before our eyes, so that every one down to the masses may always know and see what his own ancestral property is. We must exert ourselves to do that; and side by side, we should be brave to open our doors to receive all available light from outside (ibid.).

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech delivered at Stockholm on 26 May 1921 Rabindranath Tagore echoed Swamiji's ideas and criticized the education system that had ended up imitating the West. He said:

We lost our confidence in our own civilization

for over a century, when we came into contact with the Western races with their material superiority over the Eastern humanity and Eastern culture, and in the educational establishments no provision was made for our own culture. And for over a century our students have been brought up in utter ignorance of the worth of their own civilization of the past. Thus we not only lost touch of the great [*sic*] which lay hidden in our own inheritance, but also the great honour of being able to contribute to the civilization of humanity, to have opportunity of giving what we have and not merely begging from others, not merely borrowing culture and living like eternal schoolboys.²

Tagore continued:

... We must try to do our best to bring out what we have and not to go from century to century, from land to land and display our poverty before others. We know what we have to be proud of, what we have inherited from our ancestors, and such opportunity of giving should not be lost—not only for the sake of our people but for the sake of humanity (135-6).

Tagore concluded by saying,

I am glad that I belong to this great time, this great age, and I am glad that I have done some work to give expression to this great age, when the East and West are coming together. They are proceeding towards each other. They are coming to meet each other. They have got their invitation to meet each other and join hands in building up a new civilization and the great culture of the future. ... For this I have come to you. I ask you this and I claim it of you in the name of unity of men, and in the name of love, and in the name of God. I ask you to come. I invite you (137, 142).

The time has come to introduce an education that will revive the faculty of feeling in our students and show them the cultural treasures they are heir to. For urban students study tours to the villages are absolutely necessary so that they develop contact with the masses. Such tours will open their eyes and enable them to see in what conditions their brethren live and what their problems are. This will generate in them the spirit of sympathy that is necessary to solve

the problems of the teeming millions. Feeling for others coupled with an analytical bent of mind will mould their personality and make them useful and enlightened citizens. Love for the masses and a close acquaintance with them will also help the students minimize their own non-essential requirements.

Students brought up in this fashion will be feeling human beings and whatever profession they enter into, they will always try to tackle a situation from a human perspective rather than see everything from a selfish viewpoint. As journalism is concerned with providing correct information to the public, such persons will be great assets. If journalism is to do real good to society it must be unbiased and free from narrow interests. The journalist should be guided by the light of reason. It may not be easy because of the relentless pressure—from newspaper owners and politicians—that he has to withstand, but if someone decides to remain honest, then none can influence him.

Unless we make attempts to develop the right attitude, our country will only be producing selfish, money-making monsters. Journalists with large hearts, open minds and clear reasoning should take up their pens, which are mightier than swords, and fight communalism, dogmatism and sectarianism. They must highlight reports that help foster positive attitudes in the masses. To me it has always appeared that if a person is used to thinking positively, he cannot see or say anything negative. We get to read trash in newspapers and magazines today because a good number of journalists lack the positive attitude.

I feel it is time our educationists, political leaders and social thinkers seriously discussed measures that would strengthen India's future. India's future is bright; it is projected to be a global leader in the coming years. If that be so, journalism will have to play a very major role in shaping the opinions and attitudes of the people.

Swamiji believed that India should rule the world not by the power of the sword but by the power of love, cooperation and feeling for others. I hope that enlightened journalism will enlighten the people of our country and rid them of their tendency to be mere copycats. In order to inculcate positive views on life, develop a spirit of nationalism and a true global outlook in them, it has become imperative to follow Swamiji's advice. Positive views can convert a man into God. They make a journalist an enlightened journalist. This is not dogma or blind faith in Swamiji but a practical experience. He was one person who understood India's problems and gave the right solutions. If we keep him in mind our efforts to resolve the problems that plague our society will be fruitful.

In a letter written to Sarala Ghosal, the editor of *Bharati*, on 6 April 1897 from Darjeeling, Swamiji expresses his feelings about his country:

I too believe that India will awake again if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country—bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, downtrodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome, and envious. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance.³

If we can translate Swamiji's dreams into action through the press, then that would be enlightened journalism, and such journalists would be respected and emulated as ideal persons. ~

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The European Union: Redefining Citizenship

KAMOLIKA PERES

It was a chill morning in early October in London and we, the 2004 batch of Gurukul Scholars visiting the London School of Economics (LSE) under the Chevening Scholarship programme, were listening to a discourse from a member of the Department of European Studies on the genesis and functioning of the European Union (EU).

For many of us it was a revelation to realize the scale and complexity of functioning of the EU. One is always hearing about the EU in the context of protracted negotiations that are always occurring in meetings in Brussels. Certainly it is always in the news, more often for failures than for achievements, and the overall impression is one of a complex bureaucracy going about its business in arcane matters of government much beyond the comprehension of the man on the street.

This was reinforced during our subsequent visit to Brussels, where we met officials of the European Commission and visited the European Parliament. The Commission, the bureaucracy of the EU, is a complicated structure of Directorate-Generals dealing with various matters of trade, foreign policy and economy. The European Parliament seemed even more complex, with one establishment each in Brussels and Strasbourg, and with a body of MEPs (Members of European Parliament) whose legislative powers and functions are still to be coalesced into a concrete identity and function.

Complicated as it may be, the really interesting aspect of the EU was the manner in which the member states went about building a 'supranational' executive body to which they had ceded, in large or small degree, their sovereign powers relating to the economy, trade, foreign policy and even defence. It was an experi-

ment unprecedented in modern history for independent nation states with very strong national identities and a history of violent conflict to come together in this manner and consciously integrate their governance.

On the face of it, it was an impossible task. This was going through our minds even as we were taking in all the information regarding the EU, and eventually one of us remarked in the discussion forum: 'It seems improbable that the EU can actually achieve its objectives—after all, isn't it a bit utopian to believe that all these nations can actually work together as a whole?'

The speaker of the day smiled a little before giving his rejoinder: 'Well, isn't that exactly what you yourselves have achieved in India? If you could achieve it out of such a diversity of interests, cultures and social mores, why can't Europe?' And that silenced us for a while. Indeed, we had not realized until then that the challenges faced by the EU are very similar to those faced by the founding fathers of our own nation. For those of us born in post-Independence India, our nation exists with its Indian identity, its forms of governance, and its diverse communities as a backdrop of our lives—we take these for granted, as much as we do the environment around us. For the framers of our constitution, this question of cultures, religions, communities, castes and sub-castes was a vital factor in the framework of governance they chose to set out.

And yet, experiences of multicultural nation-building as we come across in India or the United States are fundamentally different from those we observe in the EU. The EU is not a nation in itself, with a democratically elected government and a grant of fundamental rights and duties for its citizens. In fact, in its constitution the EU takes a step beyond the traditional na-

tion-state model—the very reason for its genesis being the necessity to curb the worst excesses of nation states with their inflated ideas of ‘national’ self-importance.

To explore the question of how the EU differs from other models of nation-building and how therefore it redefines citizenship, we need to take a step back into the founding of the EU and the reason why it came to be.

Genesis and Functioning of the European Union

The European Union was born of a deeply felt need in World War II-battered Europe to prevent the ravages of war from destroying the nations again. However, in the years following the war, the old tussle between France and Germany for control of the steel-producing regions along the Ruhr was raising its head again. Realizing this, the French civil servant Jean Monnet proposed a pooling of Europe’s coal and steel resources into a common European Coal and Steel Community under the Treaty of Paris, 1952. This community, with France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands as members, was the predecessor of the EU as we know it today. Later, the formation of the European Economic Community (or the Common Market) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) added and strengthened the process of European integration. Finally, the treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty) resulted in the European Union, the overall structure under which the above Communities would function.

The European Communities form one of the three ‘pillars’ of the European Union—albeit the most important and one that operates primarily through the EU’s own institutions. The other two pillars—a common foreign and security policy, and police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters—are looser intergovernmental groupings. However, these latter two pillars are being increasingly administered by the Communities as they progress from

mere concepts to actual practice.

The EU currently functions with four primary governing institutions: the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice.

The European Commission is the executive of the EU. Alongside the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, it is one of the three main institutions governing the Union. Its primary role is to propose and enact legislation, and to act as ‘guardian of the treaties’ which provide the legal basis for the EU. The role of the European Commission has many parallels with the executive body of a national government, but it also has significant differences.

The Council of the European Union forms, along with the European Parliament, the legislative arm of the EU. The Council consists of ministerial representatives of various governments.

The European Parliament is the parliamentary body of the EU, directly elected by EU citizens once every five years. It meets in two locations, Strasbourg and Brussels. The European Parliament cannot initiate legislation, but it can amend or veto it in many policy areas. It also supervises the European Commission and controls the EU budget. The European Parliament is unique in that it is directly elected by the people and has legislative authority.

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) is formally known as the Court of the European Union. It is based in Luxembourg, unlike most other EU institutions, which are based in Brussels and Strasbourg. The ECJ is the supreme court of the EU. It adjudicates on matters of interpretation of European law

A Crisis of Identity

The EU’s track record is impressive and it would be simplistic to imagine that all of this could have been achieved without negotiating many tricky corners and diplomatic near-disasters. But it is characteristic of the EU that as

soon as one key issue is resolved and a compromise reached among member states, another crops up to take its place. Laudable as the EU's achievements are, its near future is plagued with a number of problems, some of them serious enough to throw doubts on the future of the EU itself.

Foremost among these is the ratification of the European constitution by the member states. On 29 October 2004, European heads of government and state signed the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe. This has gone through the ratification process in some member states but has yet to be processed in some others. However, a big setback to the process occurred when the majority (54.7%) of French voters rejected the constitution in a referendum in May 2005. The French rejection was followed by the Dutch when they refused the constitution by a majority of 61.6%.

EU's future therefore continues to be the subject of discussion, with a wide range of views attending upon the debate. In the UK for instance, public opinion has largely never been in favour of European integration—recent polls suggest that around 75% of the population is indifferent or opposed to the EU, in spite of the fact that the UK is currently holding the EU presidency. However, other countries are more in favour of integration—Luxembourg ratified the European constitution soon after the French and Dutch rejections.

Another issue that dogs the EU is the question of enlargement of the Union to the south and the east—even into territory that has been traditionally considered part of Asia. Turkey has opened preliminary negotiations to enter the EU, making it the first Muslim-majority nation to make a bid for membership. Current member states are wary of its intent. Some of the reasons can be traced back to past record of hostilities, for example with Austria and Cyprus. Some fear a possible influx of immigrants from Turkey into the EU member states and the implications of this on European society. Others argue that most of that country is on the

wrong side of the Bosphorus Strait, which many see as the dividing line between Europe and Asia. Efforts have also been made to formulate an alternative arrangement for Turkey, akin to, but falling short of, actual membership, which in turn has been rejected by Turkey. In spite of the nay-sayers, there is also a counter-belief that any rejection of Turkey's membership in the EU—or the EU's failure to accommodate a member of a vastly different ethno-cultural origin—may alienate the Union from Muslim nations and portray it as a union of 'white' nations only.

In addition to these germane issues, there are debates regarding the resolution of the EU's problematic fiscal and democratic accountability, revision of the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact, the future budget, and the Common Agricultural Policy.

So, as far as challenges to its current status or doubts about its future are concerned, the EU has more than its fair share. However, the EU phenomenon, to an extent, gained an identity and momentum of its own. It is difficult to envisage an abandonment of the whole structure and a concurrent return to post-World War II Europe. The challenge before the EU is to reinvent itself and establish a model of governance that can prove workable for Europe as a whole.

Building the Supranation

Much of the debate and controversy surrounding the EU relates to whether it should be intergovernmental or supranational in its approach. Intergovernmentalism is the now-familiar method of decision-making in international organizations where voting power is possessed by the member states and decisions are made by unanimity. Independent appointees of the governments or elected representatives have only advisory or implemental functions.

An alternative to this laborious and often stalemated method of decision-making is supranationalism. In supranationalism power is ceded by the member states to an executive or

legislative body, which consists of independently appointed officials or representatives elected by the legislatures or people of the member states. Member-state governments still have power, but they must share this power with other members. Furthermore, decisions are made by majority vote, after which the decision of the majority must be accepted by the individual member states even if they disagree with it.

Both approaches have their advocates and critics. Supporters of supranationalism argue that it allows integration and decision-making to proceed at a faster pace than would otherwise be possible. This is important when dealing with matters of practical governance and where waiting for a unanimous decision could take a long time or which might never be forthcoming. Supporters of intergovernmentalism argue that supranationalism is a threat to national sovereignty and democracy, claiming that only national governments can possess the necessary democratic legitimacy. Typically, nations like the UK, Denmark and Sweden favour an intergovernmental approach while the Benelux countries, France, Germany and Italy have tended to prefer the supranational approach.

In its workings, the EU tries to strike a balance between these two viewpoints so as to garner greater participation from member states with differing points of view. In reality, however, achieving such a delicate balance is tricky, resulting in the tortuous complexity of the EU's own decision-making process.

Nation-building in Diversity

In order to navigate the various quagmires that lie in its path, there is no doubt that the EU needs to evolve a model of citizenship and governance that works for its unique situation. How is this to be achieved? The process of nation-building in large multicultural nations may hold some lessons, especially with regard to the manner in which ideas of citizenship and modes of governance are developed, and the problems therein.

For the United States, nation-building

was an inexorable process of melding together diverse cultures under the influence of socio-economic forces. Although the constitution of the country was set in place by its founding fathers—descendants of the original settlers who had settled the land and won freedom from England—the complexion of the nation was soon changed by successive waves of immigrants from Europe. From the Irish settlers fleeing the potato blight to the Jewish immigrants fleeing the persecution of Nazi Germany, each race and culture added to the nature of the land till it has become the multicultural 'melting pot' of present times.

Initially, the 'melting pot' was reinforced by and assimilated into the 'American Identity' or the 'American Creed'—that set of values or ideals espoused by the founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence and the constitution. These ideals were themselves the product of an Anglo-Protestant work ethic brought to the new land by the settlers from Britain. Immigrants who came to this country were expected to subscribe to the Anglo-Protestant work ethic, to its creed and set of principles, and this provided the foundation for the development of the American identity.

Historically, however, the United States has always thought of itself in terms of race. The founding fathers thought themselves Protestant and that work ethic or ideal has got inextricably linked with a 'white' view of America, leaving significant gaps in the relevance of such a national identity for the blacks and Hispanics of the country. The so-called American identity does not work for them—begging the question of which national identity successive generations of immigrants can be assimilated into!

The problem assumes serious proportions in the light of Mexican immigrant issues. Large numbers of Spanish-speaking people settle in concentrated pockets in southern United States who are not 'Americanized' enough to integrate into the cultural mainstream and who do not speak the common language. This has resulted in increased public expenditure on Span-

ish-medium education in local schools.

As for India, the struggle against British colonial rule gave the Indian people a sense of identity and forged into a nation what was essentially a medley of diverse cultures and religions. To forge a national identity around this conglomerate was difficult. The authors of the Indian constitution fully realized this challenge and set the foundation of the new nation on a secular, pluralistic ideal of governance.

The actual process of governance, however, faced a number of obstacles in the way of making this ideal a ground reality. Disputes arose from differences of language and culture, it was perceived that the central bureaucracy was trying to 'impose' a common 'Hindi' culture on all states, and even the relative funding of various state governments was seen as discriminatory and prejudicial to regional interests. The national psyche was further fragmented by a rash of separatist movements, notably those in Punjab, Kashmir and the North-east.

Possibly the single most crucial factor in the development of a national identity has been the reconciliation of the 'Indian' identity with the 'Hindu' identity. In a country where 82% of the population is Hindu and where the mainstay of national culture has primarily been the Hindu religion, the champions of Hindu nationalism argue that the Hindu identity must necessarily be the Indian identity. This view, which has its own share of proponents and opponents, has brought the question of national identity to the fore. However, irrespective of separatists and right-wingers, there is no doubt that India has been successful in weaving together an ideal of 'Indian-ness' in the years following its independence. Helped along by popular media and literature and the adoption of English as a common language, and bolstered by their country's recent economic success in the global marketplace, today's Indians seem to have acquired an identity of their own. The expression 'Indian' now signifies a set of identifiable characteristics and values in their minds.

They may not be values identifiable as 'Hindu' or 'Muslim', but if they are acknowledged and are relevant for a majority of the country's citizens, then that would be all the legitimacy they need.

In both these instances, the national identity has been sought to be defined and explained in a way that can mould together a culturally diverse population. Whether done consciously or unconsciously, the perception of national identity can be a changeable thing—and it can be very different from what was set out or intended by the founders of the nation.

The European Citizen

Hence citizenship in a multicultural nation state seems bound up with the question of identity. The concept of identity of a nation state is thorny enough, but that of a supranation seems impossible to attain.

The citizenship clauses of the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties state: 'Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union' (Maastricht). 'Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship' (Amsterdam).

On the face of it, the grant of citizenship seems dependent on the formation of an integrated nation state in Europe since, so far, the concept of citizenship has always been linked to the concept of nationhood or statehood. However, the EU declaration goes beyond this prevalent notion and achieves an effective decoupling of citizenship and nationality. The Union therefore belongs to and is composed of citizens who by definition do not share the same nationality.

So the EU does not—and it should not—attempt to develop an ideal of citizenship based on ethnocultural terms and forge an identity which is 'European'. Since it is composed of members with diverse histories, ethnic myths, social mores and emotional attachments, any attempt to reinforce the 'European-ness' of its members to gain emotional

currency around the EU would not succeed.

Citizenship in the Union is a commitment of shared values, values which, in a sense, go beyond nationalistic perspectives. These are values that transcend the 'national' perspective and take into consideration the more 'human' perspective that lies beyond the bounds of ethnoculturalism.

How would this construct operate in reality? Traditional models of citizenship would suggest that it works like 'concentric circles' of citizenship with differing levels of involvement. For example, I could be a citizen of France and a citizen of Europe, but my emotional attachment to each of these may differ. The problem with this approach is that loyalty to the nation state would always be greater. This would make the Union a hotbed of national sentiments pulling in different directions, and therefore this could not be a working model for the EU.

One could go a step further and say, 'I am a citizen of France and with regard to this I enjoy certain rights from and owe certain duties to my nation. But I am also a citizen of Europe in that there are common values that all Europeans share and adhere to in civic life.' However, this too is not entirely enough. The United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies also work with similar constructs and supposedly share certain stated values. But in practice a lot of these values remain laudable but thin unifying forces, with the real direction of intergovernmental policy being set by the politics of the constituent nation states.

European citizenship differs from this in one respect: national citizenship goes hand in hand with EU citizenship. If one is a citizen of France, one is automatically an EU citizen. So being an EU citizen has no separate meaning; it effectively means being a citizen of your nation state, together with having certain shared ideals with other members of the Union. Secondly, and more significantly, there is an agreement to leave policy-making with regard to important matters of sovereign decision-making in the hands of a shared body of European peers. The

willingness to delegate decision-making to a supranational body comes precisely because of the shared values and ideals within the Union.

Hence, EU citizenship attempts to take a step beyond national citizenship in identifying certain values or ideals that are held in common by its members, thus overcoming parochial ideas of nation-building. In its essence, it is a recognition of the 'human-ness' amongst people which transcends national borders.

Will it Work?

No doubt the EU presents a unique model as a new construct of citizenship. In reality, however, the application of this construct and its acceptance by member states is difficult, as is evident from the current controversies surrounding the Union. Apart from the controversies dogging it regarding the ratification of the constitution and the expansion to the East, there are greater, systemic problems in the relationship between EU citizens and its governance.

The first systemic issue concerns the involvement of citizens in a participatory democratic framework for the EU. For most citizens the Brussels bureaucracy with its remoteness, lack of transparency and inaccessibility has meant a diminishing of the value of the individual in the political process. The citizen does not see himself or herself as having the wherewithal to influence a political process that is firstly incomprehensible in its complexity and secondly happens in remote locations away from the traditional boundaries of the nation state.

Closely related to this is the issue of accountability. The traditional checks and balances within the democracies of member states have been disrupted with a strengthening of executive powers of the supranation. However, there is no concomitant accountable authority, not even the European Parliament, which has a handle on the writ and execution of authority by the EU bureaucracy. Matters which are of vital interest to the citizenry are being decided more and more on a pan-European basis with

very little transparency and accountability.

In the absence of a participative and accountable process, the issue of the competence to develop policy or legislation comes to the fore. The balance of the nation states and the EU so far has seen more and more areas of policy-making come under the ambit of the EU. As a continuing trend, it is disturbing in its implications unless these fundamental questions of governance are addressed.

A Transnational Democracy

The EU is in the midst of an unprecedented experiment of creating a transnational democracy, with a democratic process that needs to administer a supranation. It has an option of trying to replicate the nation-state democracy on a pan-European level, but this would move away from its objective of creating a union that transcends the nation state.

It may also explore other venues—for example by using advances in information and communication technology—to develop a unique democratic model that builds a more participatory and transparent supranation.

Its future direction remains uncertain, but whatever the outcome, it will be a watershed in human political life, a manifestation of the human desire to move beyond the nation state and become supranational or even global citizens.

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Pericles on Athenian Democracy

Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. We do not copy our neighbours, but are an example to them. ... A spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws. ... Because of the greatness of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us; so that we enjoy the goods of other countries as freely as of our own. ... Wealth we employ, not for talk and ostentation, but when there is a real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it. ... We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of a policy. The great impediment to action is ... not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussion preparatory to action. ... In doing good, again, we are unlike others—we make our friends by conferring, not by receiving favours.

The Making of an Enlightened Citizen

PROBAL RAY CHOUDHURY

Youth as Citizen

Training for becoming a responsible and enlightened citizen has to begin early in life. A youth is a citizen in the making. Youth is the best period in the human lifespan. It is a period full of zest and vitality with creativity and dynamism at its peak. There is always an urgent need to harness this energy properly and direct it to positive use. Unless this energy is well directed, it could be a curse instead of a blessing. A well-harnessed youth energy can be utilized towards the service of the nation, which could be highly rewarding. The period after high school and before getting into a job is very productive, with few responsibilities and a lot of opportunities to learn and interact with other members of the society. One has, then, much time for introspection.

A young person of integrity and character is the greatest asset of a nation. A complete personality, with all its dimensions—physical, intellectual and spiritual—well developed, is a youth's most vital need. Such youths alone can build a strong and vibrant society. Awareness of the history and culture of their land is necessary to create a feeling of patriotism among them. Not only should they be deeply rooted in their tradition, but they must also be open to new ideas, especially regarding science and technology. This is what creates the right kind of citizens. A youth should be aware of the prevailing political and economic situation of the country, and should have clear and well thought out ideas and a vision for its future.

The Concept of Dharma

One who protects dharma is indeed protected by it (*dharma rakshati rakshitah*). An enlightened citizen is one who follows dharma, who lives in dharma and promotes dharma by

whatever he thinks and does. Dharma as a value concept has been with us from the Vedic times. But we live in highly challenging times, which have their own complicated demands. We have ushered in changes, which we thought were progressive, but have now fallen victim to them. Our modern needs and aspirations are so different from those of the bygone ages that many wonder how dharma can be an adequate concept to provide inspiration for modern man.

The history of our civilization has plenty of evidence to show that men of dharma have always given their best to promote the interests and welfare of the rest. When progressive human beings are seen trying to live by the principles of human welfare, then one does not lose faith, even when mistakes are noticed to occur. We can draw perennial inspiration from such characters. That will add to our strength.

The Indian Context

In many modern departments of cultural studies, it is generally believed that concepts such as nationalism, citizenship, and democracy are alien to India. It is assumed that these concepts have been borrowed from the West. Of course, the modern concept of citizenship in its practical form is derived from the Western experience. One can go back to the ancient Greeks to find the roots of democracy and citizenship. One can see how well they managed their lives though living in tiny city states, little bigger than modern municipal towns. In India, too, we find republican modes of government before the invasion of Alexander. After his invasion Chandragupta Maurya consolidated these smaller independent states under one imperial throne with the help of Kautilya (or Chanakya). One should not forget these Indian facts.

A majority of people today think that the triple pillars of democracy—the legislature, the executive and the judiciary—require reformation. What they forget is that there is also a fourth dimension to democracy—citizenship—which needs reformation too. The legislature, executive and judiciary are all constituted by common citizens. Hence there is a dire need to have enlightened citizens first. Then alone can we have a healthy democracy. Many of our present-day social reorganizations have in no way led to greater happiness in society. In fact they have often generated complacency and self-assertion. Though on the surface everyone seems happy and everything appears prosperous, when one looks beneath the surface, one finds that it is not so.

Today a new grammar of thinking has emerged. We are moving into a new culture where we are trying to ‘sacralize’ and ‘sanctify’ our ‘new values’ of materialism. We now have a contest of ‘need’ versus ‘luxury’, and the line between the two is very thin. We are living in a market-driven economy. Even our education has been tailored to suit our employment needs rather than to cater to our real social requirements. Our false justifications—of living according to the times—seem to pass unchallenged.

What Should the Youth Do?

A student must primarily aim for excellence in academics which could indirectly lead to human excellence later. But that is not enough. We must have a total development of the personality. This has manifold implications. All aspects of one’s being—intellectual and emotional, rational and aesthetic, moral and spiritual, individual and social—need to be developed. Academic excellence deals primarily with the intellectual, rational, and in some cases, the aesthetic aspects of our being. But an excellent human being is one in whom all these features are harmoniously developed. Often a person, though endowed with many brilliant attributes, lacks the capacity to share his quali-

ties with others. The ideal is to be as deep as the ocean and as broad as the sky. Paraphrasing a poem of Rabindranath Tagore’s, one could say that an ideal personality should be like the sun, which lights up the whole world with its radiance, while at the same time retaining the capacity to be caught in its entirety in a tiny dew-drop. Thus, one aspect of human excellence is talent, the other is the capacity to enter into happy interpersonal relationships with others.

As it obtains today, the primary aim of our education seems to be earning a livelihood. Sri Ramakrishna denounced this kind of education which fetches us only material benefits. It is a utilitarian scheme which can, at best, help people become economically independent to some extent. One of the factors that contribute to this attitude is the competitive world in which we live. From their very childhood students are brainwashed into believing that the be-all and end-all of the learning process is to do well in examinations. This examination mania eats into their very vitals. It is necessary for our students to know that though doing well in the examinations is necessary, what is more important is to build up one’s life in such a way that one becomes capable of dealing with difficult and new situations, and of treating others with sympathy and kindness. In other words, education should make us complete human beings, enabling us to handle human relationships and our own problems maturely. One should always have a living ideal before one’s eyes.

Our present education system lays excessive stress on cramming the brain with data. As a result, diverse pieces of data are stuffed into the student’s brain, but the capacity to extract information from all this and apply the resulting knowledge in actual life is not simultaneously developed. This is perhaps why the present situation produces many degree-holders in engineering or medicine but few real engineers or doctors!

The Ideal

According to Vedanta, man, by his divine

nature, is already fulfilled or perfect, but he vainly seeks to fulfil himself by adding things from outside. Our modern system of education does nothing to teach the students this fundamental fact, and this is its main deficiency. Swami Vivekananda described education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man'. But what is perfection? Is it the capacity to amass wealth, the capacity to become an intellectual genius, or the capacity to dominate others through one's superior power—or is there more to it? We usually think of excellence, or perfection, in terms of the capacity to outshine others. But perfection is far more than that.

True education awakens the vital aspects of one's being, both intellectual and emotional, so that one can become stronger and nobler. Its most vital function is the building up of a strong character. Education must train us to become worthy citizens of the country. This means living in harmony with our fellow beings, respecting our national heritage and resources, and having a true understanding of national ideals and goals. We should learn to subordinate our individual aspirations and be willing to sacrifice our interests for the sake of others' interests. The words of a Sanskrit couplet sum up the aim of education very succinctly: 'Character is to be preserved with effort. Wealth is inconstant; it comes and goes. When wealth is lost nothing is lost, but when character is lost everything is lost.'

Evolution has brought us up from the stage of animals to the stage of human beings. A new stage of evolution, however, is now required in order to make us truly human, living like members of one global family. This needs education in its truest sense. Swami Vivekananda says, 'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.'

Education deals with knowledge. Traditionally, Indian thought did not differentiate between secular and spiritual knowledge. All

knowledge was sacred; all knowledge was spiritual. But the aim of all lesser (secular) knowledge, *apara vidya*, was to lead one to higher (spiritual) knowledge, *para vidya*. Our thinkers were bold enough to include even the study of the most sacred books, the Vedas, under *apara vidya*. *Para vidya* was regarded as that spiritual existence by which one attained immortality. The first step towards the cultivation of this *para vidya* is to become a human being in a fuller sense. In spiritual pursuit, we try to know ourselves as Brahman and we become Brahman: 'Anyone who knows the supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed', declares the *Mundaka Upanishad*. This becoming Brahman means shedding the feeling that we are objects, or mere physical bodies, in this world of objects, and becoming rooted in our true Being as subjects or seers.

Swami Chinmayananda once said, 'Youths are not useless, they are used less.' Leaders of society should evolve schemes to ensure the proper use of the vast potential that is lying dormant within the youth. They should engage the youth in programmes and projects like mass literacy, health awareness and rainwater harvesting. Counselling uneducated villagers, forming self-help groups and participating in various other voluntary activities can effectively direct youth power along better channels.

The Indian Tradition

What we need to do is take up all those great time-tested ideals of ours—the socialistic ideal of ancient India, the great spiritual ideal of moksha, the spirit of renunciation and service, and also the synthetic outlook that all religions are different paths to God realization. In India people of different ethnic origins and religions live together. We have diverse religious sects. If all these are to be integrated into one nation, then it can be done only on this principle that all paths are equally true. The youth of this country have to be first educated in this important tradition. We talk of national integration, but integration needs a common ideal. There

should be a conscious and sincere effort to practice this ideal.

What is this common ideal? Swami Vivekananda has pointed out that it is religion based on a synthetic outlook. Only this can integrate us into a great nation. This ideal of national integration can be best achieved by nurturing an attitude of tolerance and mutual acceptance among the different cultures. The youth of this country should draw their inspiration and ideals from great sons of the soil like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. They should adopt them as their role models in order to serve their country and in turn serve themselves.

Materializing the Ideal

India is a multilingual country with varied customs and traditions. Grater emphasis on youth-exchange programmes between different educational institutions and non-formal education centres within the country as well as outside will allow our youth to get a better idea of the richness and diversity of their country. As Jawaharlal Nehru aptly commented, the uniqueness of India lies in its unity in diversity.

Despite the history of active youth participation in India's national change, they lack motivation today. That is why though we have countless doctors, few are willing to go and work in the villages. There are innumerable technocrats and engineers, but only a handful of them are willing to give up their lucrative careers abroad and stay back in the country to develop the necessary infrastructure. Motivating the youth should therefore be the first priority.

Students and young people can contribute articles to journals on the importance of national integration as they understand it. They can conduct workshops, seminars, exhibitions and rallies on the theme of national integration. But above all, personal interaction between youths from different states within India will help them develop mutual love and a sense of brotherhood. Then they can be organized to help the state machinery in times of natural ca-

lamities. Youths can also volunteer to cater to the needs of old people in old age homes and orphans in orphanages. They can raise funds for poor and destitute children by saving a percentage of their pocket money, and when they start earning they may contribute a portion of their salary to noble causes. Occasional trips and pilgrimages to holy places of different faiths can be organized throughout the length and breadth of the country to instil a feeling of cultural unity and communal amity.

We live in an era of globalization. Boundaries are slowly melting away giving rise to competition and development of survival techniques. If we think of national integration and its importance at the national level, we also need to consider it in the context of the present global scenario. That is why contemporary critics see national integration as a step towards globalization. As budding citizens of one of the ancient civilizations of the world, the youth of India have to be very sensitive to these developments. The complex situation of today raises the inevitable question regarding the fate of the country's people: What next? It is for the youth to take the leading role in steering them out of their present-day predicament.

The youth are an integral part of any undertaking, any mission that concerns the country. In the modern world, development has taken the place of integration. So true development or genuine social transformation has become the vehicle for national integration these days. Let us remember what Maharshi Patanjali implies in his *Yoga Sutras*: 'When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, your thoughts break their bounds. Your mind transcends its limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great, and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties, and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a far greater person than you ever dreamed yourself to be.' Thus, our young people should be inspired to dream big—they must dream of building a nation prosperous, beautiful and se-

cure.

The youth should also learn to be creative leaders. Creative leadership is all about switching over from certain traditional roles to more modern ones, as for example, from commander to coach, from manager to mentor, from director to delegator, and from one who demands respect from others to one who instills a sense of self-respect in them. All this can be achieved through three basic tenets: sincerity, dedication, and hard work. It is the sincere and dedicated effort of the individual alone that ultimately pays. Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita, 'Thy right is to thy work, but not to its results. Let not the fruit of action be thy motive; nor be thou attached to inaction.'

A Sanskrit verse enumerates nine qualities that are the hallmarks of distinguished lineage: 'Ācāro vinayo vidyā pratiṣṭhā tīrthadarśanam; Niṣṭhā vṛttistapo dānam navadhā kulalakṣaṇam. Good conduct, humility, erudition, prestige, pilgrimage, devotion, profession, austerity and charity—these are the indicators of noble pedigree.' In order to effect an all-round transformation in their personal lives and in the national character, our youth need to be made aware of the importance of acquiring these virtues and qualities as portrayed in our scriptures. Imbibing these ideas they will become excellent leaders who will guide the country towards

newer horizons. Such enlightened citizens, emerging out of an education system infused with values, transforming religion into spiritual force and fostering economic development, would enrich society with peace and prosperity in abundant measure.

Youths are rarely narrow-minded; they are always eager to grasp new ideas, and they have the ability to convert vision into reality. Since it is the youth alone who are capable of crossing boundaries, they have to have a practicable plan of action aimed at overcoming divisiveness and follow it until unification becomes an accomplished fact.

Conclusion

The *Niṭishataka* says: 'Ayaṁ nijah paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām; Udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva-kuṭumbakam. Considerations like 'he is mine' or 'he is another's' occur only to narrow-minded persons; to the broad-minded, the whole world is one family.' What else could be a better illustration of an enlightened citizen? It is this vision of universal brotherhood, where the entire human race is looked upon as a single family, that we should adopt. Ancient India had stressed time and again that not through violence and bloodshed, but only through peace and harmony, can life progress.

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The Call of the Vedas: 'March On!'

AaSte -g AasInSyaeXvRiSt:Qit it:Qt>, zete inP*manSy crait crtae -gIrEveit .

The future of a man keeps sitting while he is sitting, stands when he is standing, sleeps when he is sleeping, and moves when he moves. So march on!

kil> zyanae -vit s<ijhanStu Öapr>, %iÄ:Q<ôeta -vit k&t< s<p*te cr<IrEveit:

When a man sleeps it is Kali Yuga (for him), when he sits up Dwapara begins, when he steps up it is Treta, and when he moves on then begins the Satya Yuga. So march on!

crNvE mxuivNdif crNSvadumuduMbrm!, sUyRSy pZy iema[< yae n tNÔyte
cr<IrEveit.

With action one gets sweet honey and sweet fruits (various agreeable things). Look at the brightness of the sun, which never sits idle but moves on. So march on!

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna according to Swami Brahmananda

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

A Bird's-eye View of Ramakrishna's Gospels
The word *gospel* comes from *godspell* or *goodspell*, which means glad tidings, good news. This good news uplifts human minds. We may notice that some of Ramakrishna's teachings have been recorded differently by different writers. Although each of his teachings is the same, the wording and language he used were different. Stories have been recorded in more or less detail, depending on the writer. When we read the Bible, we find the same phenomenon: the same teachings or stories of Jesus were recorded differently by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The wording of each gospel is different; some stories have more details than others. It is quite natural for two persons to see and hear the same thing at the same time and yet record different descriptions of the event.

The first gospel of Ramakrishna was recorded in 1878 by Girish Chandra Sen, a disciple of the Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen; it consists of 184 of the Master's teachings. The second gospel was recorded in 1884 by Suresh Chandra Datta, a householder devotee of Ramakrishna, and comprises 950 teachings of the Master. The third gospel was recorded in 1885 by Ram Chandra Datta, also a householder devotee of Ramakrishna. It consists of 300 teachings of the Master. The fourth gospel was recorded in diary form by M (Mahendra Nath Gupta) from 1882 to 1886. Published in five volumes between 1902 and 1932, it has 176 entries. The fifth and last gospel was recorded by Swami Brahmananda, a monastic disciple of Ramakrishna. It was published serially from 1898 to 1900 in *Udbodhan* magazine. In 1905 the teachings were collected in a book,

Sri Sri Ramakrishna Upadesh, which includes 248 teachings of the Master.

All of these gospels were recorded in Bengali, Ramakrishna's mother tongue. The first three of these gospels have not yet been translated into English in their entirety. M's record was published in five volumes, which in 1942 were published in English as *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York translated this huge work, and Aldous Huxley wrote the foreword. The gospel according to Swami Brahmananda was translated into English and edited by Jnanendra Nath Mukhopadhyay and F J Alexander as *Words of the Master*, and published by Udbodhan Office, Calcutta, in 1924.

The Master's words were so impressive and instructive that Swami Shivananda, as a young disciple, had felt tempted to take notes. He recalled:

One day at Dakshineswar I was listening to the Master and looking intently at his face. He was explaining many beautiful things. Noticing my keen interest, the Master suddenly said: 'Look here! Why are you listening so attentively?' I was taken by surprise. He then added: 'You don't have to do that. Your life is different.' I felt as if the Master had divined my intention to keep notes and did not approve of it, and that was why he had spoken in that way. From that time on I gave up the idea of taking notes of his conversations, and whatever notes I already had I threw into the Ganges.¹

Ramakrishna advised his young monastic disciples to renounce both externally and internally; he advised his householder disciples to renounce internally. Many years later Swami Premananda related how the Master taught the

monastic disciples:

‘Very little of the Master’s teachings are recorded in the *Gospel*,’ he said. ‘I used to visit the Master occasionally and would note down his teachings as he heard them. ... His teachings to the monastic disciples were given in private. As soon as the householder devotees would leave the room, he would get up and lock the door and then speak to us living words of renunciation. He would try to impress upon our young minds the emptiness and vanity of worldly enjoyments.’²

The Life of Swami Brahmananda

Swami Brahmananda, a monastic disciple of Ramakrishna, was born as Rakhal Chandra Ghosh. His father was a rich landlord of their village, Sikra-Kulingram, located some thirty miles from Calcutta. His mother died when he was very young and his father remarried. When Rakhal was twelve years old, he moved to Calcutta to attend school, but he was not interested in his studies. He was mainly interested in spiritual life and practising meditation. He met Narendra (later Swami Vivekananda) in a gymnasium. The two boys became close friends and remained so throughout their lives. He and Narendra joined the Brahmo Samaj, a socio-religious movement, in Calcutta. When Rakhal was eighteen, his father became concerned about his indifference to studies and family life, and so he arranged his marriage to a sister of Manomohan Mitra, an ardent devotee of Ramakrishna.

Ironically, it was Rakhal’s brother-in-law who took him to Ramakrishna in June 1881, and later made it possible for him to renounce the world. As soon as the Master saw Rakhal, he told Manomohan with a smile, ‘A wonderful receptacle!’ Then the Master asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘Rakhal Chandra Ghosh.’ Hearing the word ‘Rakhal’, the Master went into ecstasy and softly uttered: ‘That name! Rakhal—the cowherd boy of Vrindaban!’ After regaining normal consciousness, the Master treated him as his own and at last said, ‘Come again.’ In a vision Ramakrishna saw Rakhal dancing with Krishna and realized that he had been a com-

panion of Krishna in his previous life.

In the beginning Rakhal visited the Master now and then; later he began staying at Dakshineswar. His father objected to this, telling him to concentrate on his studies. When he found that Rakhal was not listening to him, he became angry and put him under lock and key. But there is a saying: ‘The more love is obstructed, the more intense it becomes.’ The lonely, homebound Rakhal longed for the Master. On his part Ramakrishna worried about Rakhal. He went to the temple and prayed: ‘Mother, my heart is breaking for Rakhal. Please bring him back to Dakshineswar.’ The Divine Mother answered Ramakrishna’s prayer and Rakhal resumed his visits to Dakshineswar after his father relented. His wife and her family were also sincere devotees and did not object to his remaining with the Master.

Under Ramakrishna’s guidance Rakhal began to practise intense spiritual disciplines. He forgot day and night as well as food and family. The Master taught him various kinds of spiritual disciplines, such as asanas (postures), mudras (gestures), japa, meditation, yoga, and other practices. One day, the Master initiated Rakhal into the path of Shakti worship before the Divine Mother and taught him how to practise meditation on the different centres of the kundalini. Rakhal used to practise these disciplines in private. Rakhal recalled: ‘Once I was meditating in the Panchavati at noon while the Master was talking about the manifestation of Brahman as sound (Shabda Brahman). Listening to that discussion, even the birds in the Panchavati began to sing the Vedic songs and I heard them.’

Rakhal served his guru in Dakshineswar, and also in Cossipore during his last days. Ramakrishna passed away on 16 August 1886. The Master’s disciples established the Baranagore Monastery and took their final monastic vows. Rakhal became Swami Brahmananda. He then went on pilgrimage and travelled throughout India. In 1893 Swami Vivekananda went to the United States of America and

represented Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He became very famous. In 1897 he returned to India, where he established the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and appointed Brahmananda its president. After Vivekananda passed away in July 1902, Brahmananda guided the Ramakrishna Order until his own passing away in 1922.

Brahmananda's Reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna³

Some devotees would tell Sri Ramakrishna about their spiritual experiences. Hearing them, one young disciple [Brahmananda himself] asked the Master to grant him some spiritual experiences. The Master told him: 'Look, that kind of experience comes when one practises meditation and prayer regularly and systematically. Wait. You will get it eventually.'

A couple of days later, in the evening, the young disciple saw the Master walking towards the Divine Mother's temple, and he followed him. Sri Ramakrishna entered the temple, but the disciple did not dare go inside, so he sat in the natmandir [the hall in front of the Mother's temple] and began to meditate. After a while he suddenly saw a brilliant light, like that of a million suns, rushing towards him from the shrine of the Divine Mother. He was frightened and ran to the Master's room.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna returned from the shrine. Seeing the young disciple in his room, he said: 'Hello! Did you sit for meditation this evening?' 'Yes, I did', answered the young disciple, and he related to the Master what had happened. Then the Master told him: 'You complain that you don't experience anything. You ask, "What is the use of practising meditation?" So why did you run away when you had an experience?'

It is natural to experience depression now and then. I also felt like that once while I was in Dakshineswar. I was then quite young and the Master was about fifty years old, so I was shy about speaking openly with him. One day I was meditating in the Kali temple. I could not con-

centrate my mind. This made me very sad. I said to myself: 'I have been living here so long, yet I have not achieved anything. What is the use of staying here then? Forget it! I am not going to say anything about it to the Master. If this depressed condition continues another two or three days, I shall return home. There my mind will be occupied with different things.' Having decided this in the shrine, I returned to the Master's room. The Master was then walking on the veranda. Seeing me, he also entered the room. It was customary after returning from the shrine to salute the Master and then eat a light breakfast. As soon as I saluted the Master, he said: 'Look, when you returned from the shrine, I saw that your mind seemed to be covered with a thick net.' I realized that he knew everything, so I said, 'Sir, you know the bad condition of my mind.' He then wrote something on my tongue. Immediately I forgot all my painful depression and was overwhelmed with an inexpressible joy.

As long as I lived with him I had spontaneous recollection and contemplation of God. An ecstatic joy filled me all the time. That is why one requires a powerful guru—one who has realized God. Before initiation the guru and the disciple should test each other for a long time. Otherwise there may be regrets afterwards. This is no passing relationship.

Ah, how joyfully we lived with the Master at Dakshineswar! Sometimes we would be convulsed with side-splitting laughter by his humour and wit. What we now cannot experience by meditation, we then attained automatically. If my mind went astray even a little, he would understand it from my appearance and would pass his hand over my chest, setting my mind right. And how free I was with him! One day, on the semicircular west porch, I was rubbing oil on his body. For some reason I got angry with him. I threw away the bottle of oil and strode off with the intention of never returning. I got as far as Jadu Mallick's garden house but could not move further. I sat down. In the meantime he had sent Ramlal to call me back.

When I returned he said: 'Look, could you go? I drew a boundary line there.'

On another occasion I did something wrong and became extremely penitent. I went to confess it to him. As soon as I arrived he asked me to follow him with his water jug. While returning he said: 'You did this certain thing yesterday. Never do it again.' I was surprised. I wondered how he had known.

Another day when I returned from Calcutta he said: 'Why can't I look at you? Have you done anything wrong?' 'No', I replied, because I understood 'wrong action' to mean stealing, robbery, adultery, and so on. The Master again asked me, 'Did you tell any lie?' Then I remembered that the day before, while chatting and joking, I had told an untruth.

There is nothing outside. Everything is inside. People are fond of music, but they do not realize that the music we hear with our ears is trivial compared to the music within. How sweet and soothing it is! During his meditation in the Panchavati, Sri Ramakrishna used to listen to the melody of the vina within.

Sri Ramakrishna rarely slept for more than an hour or so at night. He would pass the night sometimes in samadhi, sometimes singing devotional songs, and sometimes chanting the Lord's name. I often saw him in samadhi for an hour or more. In that state he could not talk in spite of repeated efforts. Regaining outer consciousness, he would say: 'Look, when I am in samadhi I want to tell you my experiences, but at that time I lose my power of speech.' After samadhi, he used to mutter something. It seemed to me that he was talking with somebody. I heard that in earlier years the Master stayed in samadhi most of the time.

The Master would go into different kinds of samadhi at different times. Sometimes his whole body would become stiff like a log. Coming down from this state, he could easily regain normal consciousness. At other times, however, when he was absorbed in deep samadhi, it would take a longer period for him to return to consciousness of the outer world. On such oc-

casions he would take a deep breath after gasping for a while, like a drowning man coming up out of water. Even after he had composed himself, he would talk like a drunkard for some time, and not all of his speech was intelligible. At that time he would often express some small desire: 'I shall eat *sukta* [a bitter squash curry]', 'I shall smoke tobacco', and so on. And sometimes he would rub his face, moving his hands up and down.

Before the Master passed away at the Cossipore garden house, he would tell us about his visions of the Infinite. One day Girish, Swamis Vivekananda, Ramakrishnananda, Niranjanananda, and I were present in his room. We were then young boys, but Girish was elderly and extremely intelligent. Hearing a few words about the Infinite from the Master, Girish exclaimed: 'Sir, don't talk any more. I get dizzy.' Oh, what a conversation! The Master used to say: 'Shukadeva is like an ant that is satisfied with a small particle of sugar. Rama, Krishna, and other Incarnations are like bunches of grapes hanging on the tree of Satchidananda.' These are mere thoughts about the Infinite. It is hard to comprehend.

On one occasion Sri Ramakrishna said: 'One day as I was meditating in the Kali temple, I saw in a vision the veils of maya disappearing one after another. In another vision the Divine Mother showed me the light of Brahman, which surpassed the light of even millions of suns together. I then saw that a luminous form emerged from that infinite light and again merged back into its source. I experienced that the formless Brahman took a form and again became formless.'

Oh, what superhuman power the Master had! At that time we thought it was merely a peculiar power with him, and we could not understand the nature of it. Now we realize what a wonderful power it was!

It would have been wonderful if the Master's sayings, especially those about his devotional practices, spiritual unfoldment, and experiences, could have been recorded exactly and

correctly—that is to say, immediately after hearing them from him. When he talked about jnana, he did not talk about anything else. Again, when he talked about bhakti, he spoke of nothing but bhakti. He repeatedly imprinted in our minds that worldly knowledge is insignificant and futile, that one must exert oneself to attain spiritual knowledge, devotion, and love alone.

The Master could seldom sleep at night. He did not allow the boys who lived with him to sleep either. When others had gone to bed he would wake up his disciples, saying: ‘What is this? Have you come here to sleep?’ Then he would instruct each disciple and send him for meditation to the Panchavati, or the Kali or Shiva temples, according to his inclination. After practising japa and meditation as directed, each would return to the room and sleep. Thus the Master made his disciples work hard. Often he would say: ‘Three classes of people stay awake at night: the yogi, the enjoyer, and the sick person. You are all yogis, so sleeping at night is not meant for you.’

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘Eat as much as you like during the day but eat sparingly at night.’ The idea is that the full meal taken at noon will be easily digested, and if you eat lightly at night, your body will remain light and you can easily concentrate the mind. A heavy meal at night produces laziness and sleep.

Sri Ramakrishna used to encourage everybody to practise meditation. A person falls from spiritual life if he does not practise meditation regularly. The Master asked his guru Tota Puri, ‘You have attained perfection, so why do you still practise meditation?’ Pointing to his shining brass pot, Tota Puri replied, ‘If you do not clean brass every day, it will be covered with stains.’ The Master used to say: ‘The sign of true meditation is that one forgets one’s surroundings and body. One will not feel even a crow sitting on one’s head.’ Sri Ramakrishna attained that state. Once while he was meditating in the natmandir, a crow sat on his head and he did not know it.

The temple garden of Dakshineswar, which Rani Rasmani had built, provided everything Sri Ramakrishna needed for practising sadhana. If you have true faith, love, and devotion, God will provide everything you need.

A monk saved ten thousand rupees in a bank. Hearing this, the Master said, ‘He who calculates pros and cons and plans for the future will ruin his spiritual life.’

Usually the Master would not allow anyone to stay with him for more than two or three days, but once a young man stayed with him for several days. This annoyed some devotees, and they complained to the Master that he was teaching the young man the path of renunciation. The Master answered: ‘Let him take up a worldly life. Am I dissuading him from it? Let him first attain knowledge and then enter the world. Do I teach everybody to renounce lust and gold? I talk about renunciation to the ones who need only a little encouragement.’ He used to say to the rest, ‘Go and enjoy hog-plum pickle, and come here for medicine when you have colic.’

Sometimes the Master would ask people: ‘Can you tell me what kind of state I am passing through? What makes me go so often to those who cannot buy me a penny’s worth of puffed sugar cakes and who have not even the means to offer me a torn mat to sit on?’ He used to explain afterwards: ‘I find that certain people will easily attain success. It will be very difficult for the rest, for they are, as it were, pots for curd. One cannot keep milk in them.’ He would tell them, ‘I pray for you so that you may realize God quickly.’

The Master used to say, ‘Wherever there is extreme longing, God reveals Himself more.’ He also said to some people, while pointing to himself: ‘Have love for this. That will do.’ Oh! Such a wonderful play is over!

Again, he used to say, ‘One needs intense longing to realize God.’ In this connection the Master often told a story: Once an aspirant asked his teacher how to realize God. The teacher, without answering, took the disciple to

the nearest pond and held him under the water. After a while, when the student was extremely restless and about to collapse, the teacher pulled him out of the water and asked, 'How did you feel under the water?' 'I was dying for a breath of air', he answered. 'When you feel like that for God,' said the teacher, 'you will realize Him.'

Another time he said: 'Do you know what type of love is necessary for God-realization? As a dog with a wound in its head becomes frantic and jumps around, so one should desperately seek God.'

The Master used to say that there should not be any theft [that is, hypocrisy] in the inner chamber of the heart. He had great affection for the simple-hearted. He used to say: 'I don't care for flattery. I love the person who calls on God sincerely.' The Master also said that all impurities of the mind disappear by calling on God with a sincere heart.

Oh, how deep was the Master's devotion to truth! If he happened to say that he would not eat any more food, he could not eat more, even if he was hungry. Once he said that he would go to visit Jadu Mallick [whose garden house was adjacent to the Dakshineswar temple garden] but later forgot all about it. I also did not remind him. After supper he suddenly remembered the appointment. It was quite late at night, but he had to go. I accompanied him with a lantern in my hand. When we reached the house we found it closed and all apparently asleep. The Master pushed back the doors of the living room a little, placed his foot inside the room, and then left.

He could see the inside of a man by merely looking at his face, as though he were looking through a glass pane. Whenever a visitor came he would look him over from head to foot, and he would understand everything. Then he would answer that person's questions.

One day the son of a public woman came to Dakshineswar. The Master was sleeping in his room. The man entered and touched his feet. The Master at once jumped up, as if someone had thrown fire on him. He said: 'Tell me

frankly all the sins you have committed. If you cannot, then go to the Ganges and say them out loud. You will be freed from them.' But the man was ill-fated and could not do so.

Sri Sri Ramakrishna Upadesh (Words of the Master)

Swami Saradananda wrote in his introduction to Swami Brahmananda's *Words of the Master*:

The present brochure is from the pen of one who was regarded by the Master as next to the Swami Vivekananda in his capacity for realising religious ideals. And everyone who had the great fortune to come directly under the hallowed touch of the Mahāpurusha of Dakshinesvara, can testify to the great love which Sri Ramakrishna always bore towards the author of the volume. ...

The little volume, therefore, assumes a great importance in consideration of the source from which it has come. For the only motive which has moved the author to compile these selected sayings of the Master is to present them to the public, as nearly as possible, in the form in which they were originally uttered. It is indeed the labour of grateful love of the beloved disciple, than whom no one used to live so constantly with the Master, to set him at his rights before the public, seeing how his invaluable words are becoming roughly handled, deformed and distorted nowadays at the hands of many.⁴

Brahmananda completed his book when he was in Varanasi in 1914. Swami Prabhānanda writes in his *Brahmananda Charit*:

Maharaj [Brahmananda] used to write the Master's teachings sitting in his room at the [Ramakrishna Mission] Home of Service, and he would not allow anyone to be there when he wrote them. His attendants observed that sometimes at midnight, he would ask to have the manuscript brought to him. Once, after correcting it, he said: 'The Master came and told me: "I didn't say that. I said this."' This incident occurred towards the end of his compilation. Another day the Master appeared before Maharaj and said that one of the teachings that had been recorded was not his. Then Maharaj remembered that he had heard that teaching⁵ from a

Gujarati monk. Referring to this incident, Maharaj remarked: 'The Master protected me from a falsehood.' He immediately removed that teaching from his manuscript and completed his compilation project.⁶

Truth is deathless. The life and teaching of avatars are based on truth, so they are immortal. As the gospels of Buddha and Christ are passing from generation to generation without any interruption, so the gospel of Ramakrishna will continue to flow throughout the ages.

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1. Swami Chetanananda, *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), 125.
2. Swami Chetanananda, *God Lived with Them* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1998), 189.
3. The material in this section was previously published in *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him*.
4. *Words of the Master*, comp. Swami Brahmananda (Udbodhan Office: Calcutta, 1982), i-ii.
5. There was a holy man who used to practise meditation sitting on the bank of a river. One day he saw a scorpion being carried away by the

current. Out of compassion he grabbed hold of it and released it on the ground. As soon as he touched the scorpion it stung his hand, causing him terrible pain. After a while the scorpion fell back into the water and was again about to be carried away by the current. Again the monk rescued it and was stung by the ungrateful creature. A third time the scorpion fell into the river, and seeing its pitiable condition the compassionate monk started to rescue it. At that moment a bystander said to the monk: 'Sir, I have been watching you. I saw how that scorpion stung you several times. Still you are trying to save its life?' The monk replied: 'The nature of a scorpion is to sting, and the nature of a holy person is to do good to others, so I am following my nature.' Saying so, the monk picked up the scorpion once more and carried it to a distant place so that it could not again fall into the water. The nature of a holy man is to do good to the world, and he never gives up his divine nature. [Swami Chetanananda, *A Guide to Spiritual Life* (St Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis, 1988), 104.]

6. Swami Prabhananda, *Brahmananda Charit* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1982), 230.

Words of the Master

Know yourself and you shall then know God. What is my ego? Is it my hand or foot or flesh or blood or any other part of my body? Reflect well and you will know that there is no such thing as 'I'. The more you peel off the skin of an onion, the more skin only appears—you cannot get any kernel; so when you analyse the ego, it vanishes away into nothingness. What is ultimately left behind is the Atman (soul)—the pure *Chit* (Knowledge Absolute). God appears when the ego dies.

There are two egos—one ripe (*pukka*) and the other unripe (*kancha*). 'This is my house, my room, my son'—the ego that has this idea is unripe; while the ripe-ego is that which thinks—'I am the servant of the Lord, I am His child, I am ever free and all-knowing.'

A certain person asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'Kindly instruct me in one word so that I may be illumined.' To which he replied, 'The Absolute is the only reality; the universe is unreal'—realise this and then sit silent.

Long must you struggle in the water before you learn to swim; similarly, many a struggle must you pass through before you can hope to swim on the ocean of Divine Bliss.

Dhan Gopal Mukerji and *The Face of Silence*

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

A Noble, Significant Life

Dhan Gopal Mukerji was born in Bengal in 1890. He belonged to a notable freedom fighter's family. His elder brother, Jadu Gopal Mukhopadhyay, was an eminent freedom fighter. Dhan Gopal also became active in Bengal's struggle for freedom. He left India secretly for Japan at a very early age in order to avoid imprisonment. In Japan he had to survive by performing menial jobs. He lost all hope of earning a decent living and felt deeply disillusioned. Fortunately, he came into contact with an American who was recruiting Asians for indentured work and arrived in America by boat as an indentured labourer in 1910.

Mukerji's mental make-up was different from that of ordinary men. His mind was cast in a spiritual mould. Struggling mightily to eke out his living in a foreign country and extremely unhappy at being unable to find any identity on foreign soil during that remote period of history, he was undergoing a real spiritual crisis. He was searching for spiritual light very earnestly, not casually. Anyone who goes through the first chapter of his *Face of Silence*, which reveals his spiritual feelings while attending *arati* at Belur Math, will get a better understanding of the texture of his mind.

In 1912 he met the Bahai guru Abdul Baha, who instructed him in prayer, which he did not follow sincerely. In 1913 he read Sri Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*, translated by the eminent German Sanskritist George F Thibaut (1848-1914), who became the vice-chancellor of Sampurnananda University in India. He was in California working at odd jobs when he met some people who loved poetry, as he also did. He began to frequent poetry circles. He was highly appreciated for his special flair for extempore recitation; his Eng-

lish education in Bengal enabled him to recite from memory many long American and English poems, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This brought joy to many as well as to himself, for he found a congenial atmosphere among poets. A perceptive American encouraged him to go to the University of California at Berkeley to earn a degree and improve his lot. He earned a bachelor's degree at Berkeley in May 1914 and completed his studies with a master's degree in English literature from Leland Stanford University. He met his future wife, Patty, who was also getting her master's from the same university.

Transforming Power of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda

In 1914 he began working as an assistant professor of philosophy at Leland Stanford and met Miss Josephine MacLeod, a great friend of Swami Vivekananda's. His son, Dhan Gopal Mukerji II, told me that his father had heard about Swami Vivekananda during his youth in India. Miss MacLeod ignited his interest in Swamiji when she told him that Swamiji called himself a second Shankara. This made a great impact on Mukerji's mind, for he was an admirer of Shankara. 'Tantine', or 'Joe', as Miss MacLeod was fondly called, felt he could take on her burden of bearing Swami Vivekananda's teachings and mission to the world. She wrote to her niece, Alberta Sturges Montagu, about Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's transforming power on Professor Mukerji. He was spiritually receptive, 'a brain and power! Afire with Swamiji whom he never saw', she wrote.¹ She once said, 'After Vivekananda Dhan has successfully interpreted India to America.'²

She admitted in a letter written in 1914 to her sister: 'I have certainly found here in Mr. Mukerji a new expression of India. Brilliant,

strong mind, somehow, *my* responsibility to India is suddenly lifted to his shoulders.’ The young man was destined in some way to carry to the world Swami Vivekananda’s gift of ‘India’s place in the world of spiritual learning’ that was in her heart.³ A few days later she wrote to Alberta: ‘I’ve poured out all my heart of all the wealth that Swamiji poured into me—on him (Dhan Gopal Mukerji)—and now my work is done and I feel a curious lightness’ (ibid.). This meeting was to have a very significant impact on future marvellous events.

Perpetual Outcast

Dhan Gopal Mukerji’s first American novel, *Caste and Outcast*, chronicles the stirring movement of his soul. The book achieved immediate success and earned him advance funds for another literary work. He moved to France to live more economically but found himself an outcast there as well. He returned to America. Friendly advice that he move to the East Coast for better recognition as a writer caused the couple to move to New Bedford, near Boston, Massachusetts, towards the end of 1917. A son was born to them in 1918. He was educated at Exeter School in New Hampshire.

In 1920 he visited India with his wife and painfully discovered that he was a foreigner in his own beloved motherland. Both he and India had changed. Only one remained unchanged—his loving brother, Jadu Gopal. He returned to America and wrote *My Brother’s Face*, which continued the chronicle of his search for spiritual identity during that return visit.

In 1922 Miss MacLeod took Mukerji to Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and second president of the Ramakrishna Order, from whom he received initiation in India. Mukerji corresponded with Swami Shivananda and developed a father-son relationship with him. After some time, he met Swami Akhandananda at Belur. He maintained a reverent spiritual correspondence with both swamis. Both sent the ochre cloth to him in America. Mukerji also had intimate contact

with some other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and corresponded with them. He eventually returned to America even more distressed in his soul.

His association with the swamis had somehow made the cause of his unhappiness clearer to him; it created a depression in the form of intense spiritual longing. He was a man of different mettle than most. His depression can be understood not from a secular point of view, but from the higher, spiritual perspective of one who with all his will and might longs for God and awaits His vision. He was a beautiful island seeking to merge into the Ocean of Bliss. He was now acutely aware that he ‘was born to become so’, that is, to experience the same divine identity the swamis had realized. It is certain that his initiation and correspondence with them gave him the inspiration for liberation.

Literary Eminence of Undampened Creativity

Dhan Gopal Mukerji was idealistic in temperament, and sensitive and artistic in his taste. Underlying these qualities, however, was a deep current of thought, seeking genuine spiritual experience. His life of gruelling manual labour and hardship combined with a long American exile during a difficult period of history, clashed with his strong idealism. His saga reveals that such experiences never dampened his artistry and creativity. Though extremely saddened by these events, he became an excellent speaker and journalist and rose to eminence as a creative writer of children’s literature. His stories included *Gay Neck* (for which he received the John Newberry Medal in 1927); *Ghond the Hunter*; *Kari, the Elephant*; *Jungle Beasts and Men*; *Hari, the Jungle Lad*; *Hindu Fables* and *The Chief of the Herd*. He also achieved literary notability for his other works, including *Visit India with Me*, *Caste and Outcast*, *My Brother’s Face*, *Secret Listeners of the East*, *Devotional Passages from the Hindu Bible* and *Disillusioned India*. More than all his notable skills, Dhan Gopal Mukerji’s real forte was his relent-

less search for spiritual illumination.

The Face of Silence

His inner longing for God made him 'famine-stricken' to meet someone who actually knew Sri Ramakrishna and could help him recreate not the history but the legend of his life. *The Face of Silence* was born, as it were, during his visit to Mahendranath Gupta ('M'), who asked him if he sought the Ramakrishna history or the legend. His answer, 'I seek just enough facts to enable me to gather all the trust-worthy legends together',⁴ sparked this remark from the great chronicler of the Master's life: 'Good! Rama Krishna legends have not been gathered together. They contain more of the truth about him than all the authentic facts that I have written down. Legend is the chalice of truth. Facts are so veracious and so dull that nobody is uplifted by believing in them' (12-3).

Dhan Gopal Mukerji's magnum opus appeared twelve years after his valuable meeting with Miss MacLeod. In 1926 E P Dutton & Company published *The Face of Silence* in New York. His book immediately achieved a special distinction that projected it into the future. It was chosen by the League of Nations as one of that year's forty outstanding works to be added to the International Library of Geneva.⁵ Different publishers have reprinted it in 1927, 1973, 1985 and 2005.

The Face of Silence carries a simple dedication to four individuals 'who pointed me the path', according to Mukerji. Miss Josephine MacLeod's name heads the brief list. After its first publication, the book received a severe review by *Prabuddha Bharata* in its January 1927 issue. In a phone conversation on 27 September 2005, Mukerji's son told me that Swami Shivananda and Swami Akhandananda appreciated his father's book. Only a year before, *My Brother's Face*, wherein some description was given about Sri Ramakrishna's disciples, was also unfavourably reviewed by *Prabuddha Bharata* in its July 1926 issue.

More imaginative and poetic than factual,

of legendary scope, *The Face of Silence* captured the attention of readers around the world. Its true legacy is that it especially fascinated Romain Rolland, the biographer of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. It made a tremendous impact on his artistic thought and cast a deep, lasting charm on his responsive mind. Rolland paid tribute to Mukerji when he listed *The Face of Silence* in the bibliography at the back of his *Life of Ramakrishna*. He wrote that it had 'exceptional value as a work of art' because it 'is a brilliant evocation of the figure of the Master in the atmosphere of the India of his time'. He added:

For my own part I can never forget that it was to the perusal of this beautiful book that I owe my first knowledge of Ramakrishna and the impetus leading me to undertake this work. I here record my gratitude. With extraordinary talent and tact Mukerji in this book has chosen and put in the limelight those features in Ramakrishna's personality which will most attract the spirit of Europe and America without shocking it. I have felt it necessary to go beyond his precautions and to cite exact documents without allowing myself to 'embroider' them.⁶

A Son of Mother India Answers: Rejoinder to Injustice

Another book, *A Son of Mother India Answers*, was published by E P Dutton & Company in 1928. Mukerji's rejoinder to a grave injustice to India framed his response to Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, published in 1927. Mayo's book, with five reprints in the year it was published, twenty-six more in 1930 and an additional thirty-five in 1935, enjoyed general currency. It was a lengthy account of the author's visit to India as an American tourist in the winter of 1925. She betrayed the noble title she had chosen with a vituperative text of debasing delineations of Indian life and culture. Her unfair account of the conditions pervading Indian society, seen through her limited perspective, produced a deep impact in Europe and America. She quoted heavily from a book by Abbe Dubois (1770-1848), a French Catho-

lic missionary who was hostile to Indian culture. Dubois's book, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, published one hundred years earlier in 1816 by the East India Company, attacked Hindus and Hinduism (after he published his book, the Abbe was granted a pension by the British government). Mayo quoted the Abbe ambiguously, making it appear that his remarks were still current in 1927.⁷

Mukerji discovered the literary review of *Mother India* in Mahatma Gandhi's weekly newsletter, *Harijan* (Gandhi referred to Mayo as the 'Drain Inspector'). When several American friends requested him to give a rejoinder to Mayo's book, Mukerji gave a fitting reply to her diatribe. Without hurling any invectives, he employed statistics that he collected from the Indian government and European sources, and wrote a carefully reasoned response instead.

Mayo's book received excellent reviews in many journals, the London *Times* in particular. An earlier letter of protest from Zoroastrians, Hindus and Muslims signed by eminent statesmen had been printed in Indian journals. The High Commissioner of India had lent his authoritative voice and signature to this protest, but the paper ignored the valuable criticism by refusing to publish the letter (14).

Pain of Spiritual Longing Finds Its Remedy

Dhan Gopal Mukerji's deeply contemplative and inward nature found no anchor in life's evanescent experiences. The loving association with the venerable swamis and their shared correspondence deepened his innate spiritual propensity. From 325 East 72nd Street, New York, he wrote a letter to Swami Akhandananda in Bengali on Sunday, 12 July 1936, and then sat down to meditate. Alone with God in meditation, he decisively ended his physical life by hanging himself in his room that same night. It is very likely that he had a vision of Sri Ramakrishna that prompted him to this action. His wife was certain that he left his body in a moment of spiritual might. Upon request, Swami Bodhananda, the head of the Vedanta

Society of New York at the time, translated Mukerji's letter to Swami Akhandananda into English. The letter itself indicates Mukerji's great spiritual fervour. Swami Bodhananda also performed the cremation ceremony and led a small funeral service in his honour.

I received a moving letter from his son on 16 September 2004. His humble and frank remarks included the following:

Swami Shivananda's letters to him were nurturing and supportive. He saw my Father's vision of pursuing Swami Vivekananda's USA heritage—to bring his message to the American people. Swami Akhandananda was the President of the Order who realized my Father was seeking death to join Thakur. He wrote him a beautiful letter in late June or early July. My Father wrote back in Bengali and then took his life. ... In 1933 my Father renounced this world and wanted me to continue to meditate with him. I could not. I had lost my Father because my Father had lost his heart to God. I was to receive a letter from him telling me he was renouncing his role as my Father and that I was to look to Swami Akhilananda for guidance. ... Swami Akhandananda understood my Father's love for God—I know, as it was overwhelming my mother, and I—had driven him into pain. He would cry all day to see God. 'Let me see You!' was his plea. The letter from Belur with the ochre cloth, released him from the unbearable anguish of being separated from God. I mention all this to you because the newspaper clipping in '36 'Author Commits Suicide'—true as it was—only described the news—not the liberation of a beautiful Soul.

Dhan Gopal Mukerji and Romain Rolland: Mysterious Junction of Two Great Souls

The spiritual impact of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, coursing unerringly through several individuals to Rolland and through his two biographies to the entire world, is an engaging chronicle. It was Romain Rolland's destiny to learn about Sri Ramakrishna from Dhan Gopal Mukerji's *Face of Silence* thanks to the efforts of his sister, Madeleine, and to be encouraged through the agency of Miss Josephine MacLeod. We now give a brief background of the

mysterious junction of these two great souls.

According to Mr Mukerji's letter of 16 September 2004, in the first quarter of the twentieth century Romain Rolland was living in Geneva, Switzerland, very depressed. Due to his pacifist views, his native government of France had refused to permit Romain Rolland to return to France, forcing him to remain in exile in Geneva. Added to this misery was the departure of his wife for another man. A serious automobile accident further debilitated him, leaving him in a wheelchair and unable to read for himself. His intuitive and dedicated sister Madeleine took tender care of his physical and psychological needs and significantly mitigated his incorrigibility and ill humour over these matters. She sought for and purchased books she knew would interest him and read them aloud to him in French. In September 1926, during a discussion about the religious movements in India with one of his visitors, Rolland learned about the newly formed Ramakrishna Mission and heard about the fascinating personality of Sri Ramakrishna. From that moment, he wanted to learn more about Sri Ramakrishna's life.

Miraculously one day, Madeleine discovered *The Face of Silence*. Rolland did not know English. His sister translated the work aloud to him in French, thus becoming the first to nourish his thought with Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. The eminent religious historian, Mircea Eliade, identifies an additional formidable obstacle that Rolland had to transcend: 'It was in total ignorance—of the country, the history, the languages of India, and even of English—that Rolland wrote the four volumes on Gandhi, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda! I believe

the case is unique in the history of modern culture.'⁸

The letter I received from Dhan Gopal Mukerji II gives a little background and confirms events that immediately followed Madeleine's discovery of the book:

We were living in Geneva at the time Madeleine Rolland found the book, 'Face of Silence'. My father's stay was to participate in the translation of 'Face of Silence' and 'Caste and Outcast' into French by the Victor Attinger publishing firm in Geneva and Neuchatel. ... It was she who saw the book, bought the book, and read it. The effect on Romain Rolland was, I heard at the time, instantaneous. He was suddenly enflamed. She called Attinger to get my Father's address in the USA. He told her, 'You don't need it. He and his family are living here in Geneva.'

(to be concluded)

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7. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, *A Son of Mother India Answers* (New York: E P Dutton, 1928), 30-1, as in Swami Tathagatananda, *Journey of the Upanishads to the West* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2002), 215.
8. *Josephine MacLeod and Vivekananda*, 404.

'Renunciation is what Ramakrishna lived and preached. How can you make history out of renunciation? Oh, I heard him. I also saw his face. ... If you wish to make him live again, renounce all and seek God. ... Now you see, my son, how crippled your written and spoken words are. They cannot limp to any place. God fools us with little brains. But Ramakrishna could not be fooled. So he became God.'

—*The Face of Silence*



Reviews



*For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.*

The Vedanta Way to Peace and Happiness. Swami Adiswarananda. SkyLight Paths Publishing, Sunset Farm Offices, Route 4, PO Box 237, Woodstock, Vermont 05091, USA. 2004. viii + 220 pp. \$29.99.

The Vedanta way is the perennial way. It is as old as the hills and yet as fresh as a flower. It is as relevant to us as it was to our ancient predecessors, and as significant to the rest of the world as to India. Ours seems to be very troubled times, but is not each age an age of anxiety for its contemporaries? The wearer best knows where the shoe pinches and we are best aware of the troubled nature of our time, described by Franz Kafka as 'the day of the leopards'.

How are we to be happy in the twenty-first century, when we have been overtaken by technology and when greed and uncontrolled consumerism are rampant? Swami Adiswarananda, Minister and Spiritual Leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York and the celebrated author of *Meditation and its Practices*, has shown us the way competently and comprehensively in this illuminating recent study.

Swami Adiswarananda takes his cue from Swami Vivekananda, who concentrated on the 'practical' aspects of Vedanta. He points out in the introduction that Swami Vivekananda emphasized the problem-solving aspects of Vedanta. What is the value of Vedanta, Vivekananda would ask, unless it enriches our lives and leads us to peace and happiness?

The author has perceived the complexities of life but is not baffled by them. Nor does he want us to be baffled. Here is his invaluable advice: 'Vedanta reminds us that the course of life is mysterious. It is plagued by ceaseless changes and uncertainties. Pain, suffering, old age, and death are harsh realities that cannot be ignored or avoided. Vedanta maintains that problems and solutions go together; one cannot exist without the other.' After this, the author strikes a more emphatically optimistic note: 'If nature presents a problem, it also points toward a solution. In suggesting solutions, Vedanta does not

deal with the occult or the miraculous and does not cater to fads, whims, or pious imaginations. According to Vedanta, our happiness depends upon peace of mind, peace of mind on self-control, and self-control on awareness of our true Self.'

Swami Adiswarananda has reminded us of certain basic Vedic exhortations. If we want happiness, we should reduce our dependencies. If we want joy, we should reduce our desires. If we want peace, we should reduce our ego. If we want security, we should keep the instincts of sex and palate under control. If we hope for the best, we should be prepared for the worst. We should face problems by overcoming them. We should face the changes of life by falling back on the changeless. We should face death by knowing the deathless in ourselves. We should face the uncertainties of life by making them a part of our life. We should face the past by acting on the living present. We should face the nightmares by waking up. We should face sufferings by developing immunity against them.

The author notices that many of us, frustrated by a sense of crisis, are seeking solace in new movements like fanaticism, atheism, agnosticism, humanism, prophetism, supernaturalism, drug mysticism, occultism, new-ageism, universalism, and nature mysticism. But all these escape routes, including pursuit of art and intellectual reflection, have their severe limitations and are not ultimately helpful. They cannot lead us to our salvation. This only Vedanta can do.

The principles of Vedanta are scientific, democratic, universal, and psychological. According to Vedanta, the Ultimate Reality is all-pervading Pure Consciousness. Vedanta asserts that 'Truth is one, sages call it by various names'. The innate nature of human individuals is divine. Creation is without any beginning. Good and evil are two opposite forces, one of which cannot exist without the other.

As for the sufferings of life, the swami points out, they are not due to any retributive divine justice. Nor are they due to bad luck, chance, hostile stars or planets, or to any external agency. The causes of suf-

fering in life are *avidya* (ignorance), which removes us from the centre of our being, selfishness, attachment, aversion, and lust for life. 'All the maladies of life', concludes the author, 'have their root in this separation from our true Self.'

The validity of spiritual truth depends upon direct perception. This is possible only when we go through a cathartic process. The goal of all prayer, meditation, and performance of rituals is purification of the mind. Permanent transformation of character follows direct perception. Self-knowledge is the summum bonum of life, its alpha and omega. According to Vedanta, there are four human values: righteous conduct, acquisition of wealth, fulfilment of desires that are legitimate, and spiritual freedom (dharma, artha, kama, and moksha). Vedanta believes in the unity of life. All existence is one. It is this oneness of existence that is the foundation of all ethics and morality. Finally, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, 'As many faiths, so many paths'. All the different religions have the same purpose of direct perception of the Ultimate.

The Vedanta Way to Peace and Happiness examines the difficulties people face in quest of spiritual enlightenment: questions about human suffering, death, doubt of God's existence, and so on. Swami Adiswarananda dispels the doubts convincingly. He asserts, very sensibly, that happiness depends upon peace of mind, and peace of mind calls for self-mastery. But nothing is possible without the grace of the Divine. 'We strive for the Divine only when the Divine draws us toward it.' (And the better and nobler we are, the more we attract the Divine.)

Lucidly and beautifully written and elegantly produced, the book has fruitfully drawn upon a vast storehouse of learning. This is a fresh but timeless contribution to Vedantic literature and will be a source of help and inspiration to many.

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Sleep as a State of Consciousness in Advaita Vedanta. Arvind Sharma. State University of New York Press, 90 State Street, Suite 700, Albany, New York 12207. Website: www.suny.press.edu. 2004. ix + 181 pp. \$35.

The range of issues that Prof. Arvind Sharma has been addressing in his writings over the years are

truly encyclopedic. His interests have stretched from Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina studies to gender and women's issues, human rights, public administration, management and public enterprise. That his engagement with Hinduism covers Advaita and Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, personalities ranging from Ramakrishna and Gandhi to Rajneesh, as well as vignettes of Vrindaban, underlines the breadth of his sweep.

The present volume is a scholastic exposition of one of the most important metaphors of Advaita Vedanta—the state of deep (or dreamless) sleep, *susupti*. Our normal experience is of the manifold. Since any philosophical system must, in the end, base its tenets on experience in some form, it would be hard to grant the Advaita philosophy any credibility, had oneness or non-duality been completely outside the realm of our day-to-day experience. But such an experience of non-duality does occur in our lives every day, when we fall into dreamless slumber. The Advaitic experience is nothing other than making this experience of deep sleep fully conscious.

When we seek for explanations of phenomena inside the framework of space-time, we take recourse to the principle of causality. But the Vedantic quest seeks subjective explanations, and hence the search is in subjective consciousness. When we ask 'From where did this tree in front of me come?', the scientific explanation is in terms of objective causes—the seed from which the tree germinated, the soil and water conditions, and so on. But the Vedantin takes the question to mean something quite different. 'What is it in me that makes me see this tree in front of me?' is the question that is relevant for him.

Taking all of one's subjective experience as the basic datum, three states of experience are delineated in Vedanta: waking (*jāgrat*), dream (*svapna*) and deep sleep (*susupti*). Of these three, it is only in the third that the subject-object duality is obliterated. But whenever we discourse philosophically, we enter the realm of duality; hence the diversity of opinions regarding this state. Nevertheless, the stance we adopt towards deep sleep is bound to affect our view of Reality, and hence our philosophy of life.

After a brief introductory chapter, the author sets the ball rolling by collecting together several passages from the *prasthānatraya*—the Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutras*, and the Bhagavadita. The origin of the differences in the interpretation of *susupti* is traced back to the original source, the Upanishads. There is a difference in the emphasis on this state in

two of the principal Upanishads: In the *Bṛihad-aranyaka*, marked similarities between the state of liberation and the state of *śuṣupti* are brought out, and this gives rise to a number of ontological problems; in the *Chhândogya*, the problems arise from the idea that the individual merges into Brahman during deep sleep and emerges from it on waking.

An investigation into these difficulties leads to certain foundational issues. What is it that individuates the jiva? What is it that distinguishes deep sleep from liberation? The answers provided are quite illuminating: '... there is an internal organ of which intellect is a mode and it is the connection of the self with this that causes individuation in samsara. ... while individuality ceases in sleep, the individual does not.' In deep sleep 'while the intellect becomes latent, the Self remains patent'.

The next chapter deals with the *Mandukya Karika*, the best-known among pre-Shankara Advaitic texts. Here we find the first indications of a practical means of 'contacting the deep-sleep self'. The self in *śuṣupti* is identified with *prājñā*, which has the ether in the heart for its locus. Shankara, in his commentary on the *Karika*, applies the trichotomy within the waking state itself. He advocates discrimination between the seer and the seen (*drk-dṛśya viveka*) leading finally to the discrimination between pure subjective awareness (or *cit*) and the pure *ajñāna* of *śuṣupti*. This brings out the objective nature of *avidyā*, which is absence (*abhāva*) of all individuated existences. The experience of deep sleep has the awareness of *abhāva* as its content. In the state of realization this too is missing, and herein lies the distinction between *śuṣupti* and realization.

Chapter Four comprises Shankara Vedanta proper. The author clarifies here the subtle difference between *abhāva vṛtti*, giving rise to the knowledge of having slept soundly, and the persistence of the *sākṣi* (witnessing self) in the deep sleep and waking states, giving rise to the same knowledge. Shankara further underscores the fact that the state of *śuṣupti* is a state of bliss, for the man who sleeps soundly also says that he slept blissfully. It is the *cit* aspect of the Atman that is fully eclipsed in deep sleep.

Chapter Five deals with post-Shankara Advaitins like Sureshvara, Vachaspati Mishra, Vidyaranya, Sadananda and Dharmaraja. Sureshvara carries on with Shankara's incorporation of the three states within the waking state itself. He subdivides each state into three further sub-states and identifies them with different experiences of our daily life.

The analysis of deep sleep brings out the difference between the two major schools of Advaita, the Bhamati and the Vivarana. The principal difference lies in determining the locus of *avidyā*—Brahman or jiva. When the jiva enters *śuṣupti*, so the Bhamati-kara claims, the universe vanishes. This is a consequence of the *drṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda*: *avidyā*, the cause of the jiva, absorbs it back into itself. But the Vivarana school says that the jiva remains in its pure state in deep sleep as Consciousness and hence the world continues. This is the *sṛṣṭi-drṣṭi-vāda*. Sadananda makes an interesting point: it is the *ānandamaya* self that experiences bliss in deep sleep and this is rendered intelligible by the *vijñānamaya* self in the waking state due to persistence of the *sākṣi*.

The sixth chapter discusses three modern philosophers—Aurobindo, Krishnachandra Bhattacharya and Ramana Maharshi. Of these, Ramana Maharshi is given the greatest importance, as the illustration of deep sleep was a favourite metaphor of his. A beautiful analogy would make his position clear. A diver, when he is under water, cannot communicate with those above. Similarly, the sleeper, in deep sleep, having lost contact with his organs of expression, cannot communicate with others. Only when he is awakened by his *vāsanās*, can he do so. An analysis of the state of *jīvanmukti* is also given in this context.

The author concludes by summarizing the illustrative as well as analytical importance of the physiological state of deep sleep in Advaita.

The book puts together the realizations and ideas of various savants, spiritual personages and scholars regarding the state of deep sleep. Any scholar investigating the *avasthātraya viveka* of Advaita, or one interested in the philosophical significance of the physiological state of deep sleep, should find this work invaluable.

Br *Brahmachaitanya*

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An Extensive Anthology of Sri Ramakrishna's Stories. *Babaji Bob Kindler*. Sarada Ramakrishna Vivekananda Associations, PO Box 1364, Honokaa, Hawaii 96727, USA. E-mail: SRVinfo@srv.org. 2004. xxix + 732 pp. \$30.

'Verily I tell you I know nothing but God', said Sri Ramakrishna. And Sri Ramakrishna spoke

of the God that he experienced—within and without, day and night—in simple language, stories, anecdotes, parables, metaphors and allegories. Seeing God directly in all His aspects and speaking about Him has made Sri Ramakrishna's life a veritable encyclopedia of religious, spiritual, mystical, philosophical and metaphysical experience. Sri Ramakrishna was also a great teacher and he inspired and urged others to realize God, which he said was the goal of human life. Aspirants who came to him were numerous, of various temperaments and at different levels of development. He instructed and guided them according to their needs, warning them of the obstacles in their way. So his teachings and instructions too—dealing as they do with paths, disciplines, pitfalls, signs of progress, and so on—are an encyclopedia of spiritual life.

An Extensive Anthology of Sri Ramakrishna's Stories has taken Sri Ramakrishna's God-experiences and teachings and strung them into a beautiful garland. The range is breathtaking and comprehensive. Here we see Sanatana Dharma, Eternal Religion, at its best. Sri Ramakrishna's profound words of wisdom make the materialistic mind start questioning its experiences, the truth of which it usually takes for granted. However, the Great Master does not leave it in uncertainty; he is an ocean of compassion who replaces our illusions with divine grace.

The teachings and stories in this massive anthology are mainly taken from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. The author, Babaji Bob Kindler, has at times slightly reworded some stories and parables without marring their meaning. His modern titles are very striking. Altogether 687 stories are categorized into three main parts: 'Eternal Principles', 'Obstacles to Realization', and 'Spiritual Path'. These are further classified topic-wise. 'Eternal Principles' has sections on Brahman, Shakti, Ishvara, Maya, and so on; 'Obstacles to Realization' has sections on Worldliness, Ego and Egotism, Ignorance and Bondage, Desires, and the like; and 'Spiritual Path' has sections on Yearning for God, Holy Company, Sadhana, Self-surrender, Character, Devotion, Knowledge, Renunciation, and more arranged under three subdivisions: Necessities for Successful Spiritual Practice, Specific Practices, and The Results of Spiritual Practice.

Each section contains many sayings/parables, and every one of them is uniquely commented on with wonderful insight. One might imagine that the commentary on one story in a particular section

would tend to repeat itself elsewhere, but amazingly it does not! For example, the section on Ego and Egotism has twenty-six sayings/parables, but the commentary on each story is different. The average length of a story and its commentary is about a page.

Each saying/parable is given in bold, followed by a short, succinct explanation of two or three lines in italics. Then comes the commentary, which stays close to Sri Ramakrishna's core teachings. Here the author also draws support from various Indian scriptures, philosophies, mythologies, spiritual traditions, mysticism, the teachings of saints, devotional songs, etc. He has, at times, allowed himself some latitude in the commentary, but this becomes necessary in order to give creativity a little play. His lucid language makes the deep spiritual topics comprehensible.

The categorization of the stories is wonderfully and logically accomplished so that the book tends to unfold gradually, expanding our minds and letting the spiritual luminosity of Sri Ramakrishna flood our hearts. There is a very helpful Sanskrit Glossary, a Vedic Teachings Glossary, a Vedic Teachings Appendix and a Cross-reference Index to the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

This book is a real mine of spirituality for all types of aspirants of all religions. Sri Ramakrishna's teachings are universal and the anthology adheres to that high ideal. The essential teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are so simple that even a child can grasp them. This anthology too has kept things simple and is heartily recommended to everyone.

The production is flawless: the typefaces are large enough to allow for easy reading, the interline spacing is judicious, and the overall printing superb. Numerous black-and-white graphics embellish the stories and the book.

Swami Satyamayananda
Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata

The Wisdom of Sri Chinmoy. *Sri Chinmoy*. Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007. E-mail: mlbd@vsnl.com. 2004. xii + 396 pp. Rs 295.

With the growing popularity of Vedanta and Hindu religious practices, countless books detailing meditation techniques and dealing with various aspects of spiritual life are being written in all languages by people belonging to all religious tradi-

tions all over the globe. Often the layman is confused by the sheer variety of books published and loses hope of ever finding the truth. This being the situation today, the book under review comes as a welcome surprise to spiritual seekers. A book of extraordinary merit, it deserves a place by your bedside, to be read and reread. The entire book is in dialogue form, in the question-answer format. Although a compilation of the best teachings culled from 1,300 (!) published books of the author, it does not seem insipid or irrelevant at any point. The credit definitely goes to the devoted work of the compilers, Andy Zubko and Jeff Blom (Sevak Ram).

The introduction by Monsignor Thomas J Hartman, Diocese of Rockville Center, New York, brings out the universal appeal of the book, and Sri Chinmoy's letter to Sevak Ram, which follows the introduction, lends the work a stamp of authenticity: 'I wish to thank you from the very depths of my gratitude-heart for your manuscript of my writings. ... You have compiled my writings with utmost love, concern, faithfulness and devotion. ... I wish to tell you that the manuscript which you both created is unparalleled. It is a true labor of love, revealing both your remarkable attention to detail and tremendous spiritual depth' (ix).

The reader will find an immediacy in the questions raised and the relevance of the answers given. The answers, one must note, are not encumbered by rigid doctrines and scriptural quotations. The teacher speaks from the depths of his being and his universal appeal induces the enticed reader to delve deeper into the book. The approach is always positive and constructive, instilling hope and faith even in the casual reader. Practical psychology and applied religion combine to give the best possible solutions. Sri Chinmoy bases some of his answers on the Upanishads and draws extensively from the collective wisdom of other saints. Quoting the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, he tells us something significant: 'When the hour of death approaches us, if we feel that we can never be destroyed, that nothing can shake us and that we are the very essence of life, then where is sorrow, where is fear, where is death?' (38).

The story of the proud pundit is used effectively to emphasize the futility of scriptural knowledge devoid of realization. 'If we want to convince others of the Truth, our highest authority must come only from the direct knowledge of Truth and not from any scripture. In the divine play, unilluminated authority plays the role of a lamp, while Truth in real-

ization plays the role of the Light' (295). Sri Chinmoy drives the point when he says, 'Religion is not a matter of reason. If we live in our oneness-heart, we will feel the essence of all religions, which is love of God. But if we live in the mind, we will only try to separate one religion from another and see how their ideologies differ. It is the heart that can have a true intuitive understanding of the height and breadth of all religions' (297).

Sri Chinmoy speaks on all aspects of Hindu belief and custom, and always tries to highlight the positive aspects of the faith. There is no criticism of any kind and this inclusive approach is as endearing as it is laudable. Tricky questions do not deter him and he gives the most plausible answers. In fact, this can be a guidebook for teachers of Indian philosophy; it will equip them to deal with the queries of students from other cultures and faiths. At places Sri Chinmoy makes bold statements that reveal the strength of his personality. After all, a true spiritual teacher is not afraid of criticism or public opinion. His only concern is the correct interpretation of Truth. Look at this: 'Christian missionaries went to India and all over the world, saying, "There is only one savior, the Christ." ... Each genuine spiritual Master is a savior, needless to say; but to say that he is the only savior, or that his path is the only path, is foolishness' (148-9).

There are evident reflections of Sri Ramakrishna's ideas in many of Sri Chinmoy's answers. This only indicates his deep understanding and reverence for him. He speaks of him with the highest regard and quotes him frequently. In the chapter on 'Guru/Master/Teacher', he says, 'Sri Ramakrishna, for example, wanted only a limited number of disciples. He was very particular about his disciples.' The conclusion he draws from this catches our attention: 'What matters is not the number of disciples a Master has, but whether he takes them to the goal. If I am realized and somebody else is realized, we are like two brothers with one common Father. Our goal is to take our younger brothers and sisters, humanity, to the Father. The game will be complete only when all people are taken to God' (183-4).

The book should have contained an introductory biography of Sri Chinmoy for people who do not know about him. Also, a glossary of the Sanskrit terms occurring in the text would have helped Western readers. However, coming from a reputed publisher, the volume is well produced, and the excerpts from reviews printed on the back cover are no exag-

generations. On the whole, it is a must buy for every serious spiritual aspirant; it will go a long way in clearing some of the usual doubts that torment the beginner and the initiated.

Swami Atmajnananda

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Swami Vivekananda: India's Emissary to the West. *Swami Ranganathananda*. Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan Trust, 5 Singarachari Street, Triplicane, Chennai 600 005. 2004. 64 pp. Rs 20.

This is an invaluable booklet by Swami Ranganathanandaji, the late President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, who attained mahasamadhi recently. Even in his advanced age and failing health, he thought constantly about the welfare of his countrymen. During his last days, when someone noticed that he was not sleeping and asked him about the reason, he replied, 'My head is full of our country's problems.' Such was his passionate love for our country and we see this reflected in all his works. The present booklet, though a small one, is one among such works.

Swami Vivekananda observed that, whenever in the history of the world new routes opened up, Westerners used them to expand their territories and commerce, while Indians used them to spread their religious message of oneness and peace across the world. India's conquests have always been bloodless and cultural. In passing, Swamiji mentioned four such Indian influences that have taken place: (i) during the time of the pre-Persian Empire; (ii) during the Persian Empire; (iii) during the period of Greek ascendancy and (iv) during the British invasion of India and her neighbouring countries.

Swami Ranganathanandaji explains in detail as to how, during all these four periods, the Indians utilized the opportunity to spread their spiritual message. Elaborating on the last one, he narrates the salient features of Swami Vivekananda's life as a world mover. Starting with Swamiji's preparations to go to the United States, he explains the numerous trials and tribulations that he faced there and the astounding success that he achieved at the Chicago Parliament of Religions and in the American and European continents. Equipped with God's command to carry the message of India abroad,

Vivekananda interpreted ancient Hindu thoughts to suit the needs of modern society and thereby burst the popular Western myth that Indians were primitive barbarians worshipping stones and snakes. Indeed, some of the thinking people of the West, such as Sister Nivedita, caught the spirit of Swami Vivekananda, became his disciples, and devoted their whole lives to the service of India and the spread of Vedantic thought.

The author concludes by saying that Swamiji dreamt of a new world civilization based on the unity of Eastern and Western ideals, which would usher in an era of peace, freedom and prosperity.

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Vedic Records on Early Aryans. *L N Renu*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati Munshi Marg, Mumbai 400 007. Email: *brbhavan@bom7.vsnl.net.in*. 2004. xviii + 247 pp. Rs 225.

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister, once remarked: 'If a lie is repeated often enough, it will be taken for real.' There is no better example of this than the so-called Aryan invasion theory. This theory was proposed by Max Mueller towards the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to it, the ancient Aryans were originally inhabitants of Central Asia who lead a nomadic tribal existence. For some unknown reasons they swooped down the Himalayan valleys to Punjab around 2000 BCE. There they found a flourishing civilization, which Max Mueller called 'Dravidian'. The Aryan savages destroyed this civilization and drove away the Dravidians southwards to the Indian peninsula. Having settled down in Punjab, they produced probably the most sublime literature in world history—the Vedas—within a short span of 500 years.

This theory, totally unsupported by any proof or evidence, has been repeated so often that it is now taken for a fact. All history books about ancient India, including school textbooks, start with this fiction. But so much information has become available about the early Aryans during the last fifty years that the Aryan invasion theory can now be safely buried and forgotten.

This is the background against which one should read Renu's book. For readers unfamiliar with the latest discoveries about ancient India, the book may

appear like a fable, rich in imagination but poor in facts. However, a reader well aware of the current scenario cannot but admire the author for this remarkable study.

The author has made a detailed study of Vedic literature and has tried to reconstruct life in India during those times. He brushes aside the claim of historians that the Aryans were invaders from outside the borders of the country. On the other hand, the Aryans migrated outwards from their Indian homeland. As proof, Renu quotes extensively from the Samhitas of the four Vedas and the Gathas of Zoroastrianism. According to him, one can trace the gradual evolution of the Vedic literature through six stages. It started with monosyllabic mantras like Om, followed by a string of words without any grammatical structure. The third stage was the grammaticization of the mantras, followed by Sanskritization. The fifth stage consisted in the use of an extended vocabulary, leading to the currently available form of the Samhitas.

The Aryans were a vast community of people well spread out geographically. Those among them who gave great importance to yajna were called the orthodox Aryans. There were dissident groups also, like the Dasyus, Dasas, Asuras, Ahis, Panis and Shudras, who did not believe in yajnas. All these groups lived together, but had occasional conflicts among themselves. When the dissident Aryans found that the orthodox Aryans had gained an upper hand, they thought it wise to migrate to other lands like Persia, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Renu traces this outward migration of the Aryans by using references from the Zoroastrian Gathas. He surmises that this migration took place in several stages, during which the dissidents had to face a hostile environment wherever they went. They ultimately settled down in Persia, Afghanistan and other places. The literature and archaeology of these places still bear testimony to the migration.

The book makes interesting reading. Those who are skeptical about this interpretation are challenged by the author to refer to the original sources, which are cited profusely. There is no doubt about the effort put in by the author to reconstruct the ancient history of the Vedic people. The book does deserve a serious and critical study. The language is simple to follow and the get-up is quite attractive. (The only flaw in our copy is that pages 63 to 70 are missing!)

It is hoped that the 'eminent historians' of the Establishment will give their serious consideration

to this book and rewrite the early history of our motherland more in line with facts than fiction.

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A Noble Heritage. *Jhaverchand Meghani*; trans. Vinod Meghani. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 2003. xxx + 154 pp. Rs 125.

The Shade Crimson. *Jhaverchand Meghani*; trans. Vinod Meghani. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 2003. xxx + 114 pp. Rs 110.

A Ruby Shattered. *Jhaverchand Meghani*; trans. Vinod Meghani. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 2003. xxviii + 176 pp. Rs 135.

Among the various literary genres, folklore has a distinct identity. By the very fact of its not being modern it constitutes a class apart. Folklore not only provides insight into the development of a society and the personality traits of its people, it can also reshape the cultural and literary life of contemporary society.

Saurashtra, the 'land of saints', located in the southern peninsula of Gujarat, boasts of a glorious past minutely mirrored in its rich folklore. It is also equally proud of Jhaverchand Meghani (1896-1947), a litterateur who wrote nationalist poems, bhajans, fiction, critical reviews and short stories. Jhaverchand Meghani will forever be known as a renowned folklorist and a pioneering researcher who, after a twenty-five-year-long incessant and painstaking excavation of Saurashtrian folklore, unearthed innumerable songs, lullabies, stories, ballads, odes, fables and elegies. Based on this single-handed research and documentation he wrote many scholarly treatises on the various aspects of folk literature. In fact, he reconstructed about a hundred short stories from the fables and legends he had jotted down during his quest over the years. They were published during the 1920s in five volumes titled *Saurashtra-ni Rasadhar*. These stories cast a deep influence on the upbringing of an entire generation in Gujarat during the Gandhian era and imbued it with eternal and universal values.

Having himself witnessed the erosion of values in contemporary society, Vinod Meghani, Jhaverchand Meghani's son, decided to translate some of the stories into English and put them in the hands of a wider cross-section of people, with the hope of re-

viving spiritual values and inculcating in the younger generation faith in the inherent goodness of man. Hence these volumes.

The first two volumes—*A Noble Heritage* and *The Shade Crimson*—contain twenty-five stories. They have a rugged narrative element that appeals to readers of all ages. The persons in these stories hail from native communities in Saurashtra. The main characters are exquisitely chiselled by Meghani, the narrative is flowing and engrossing, and the absorbing sagas of heroism, valour, nobility, fidelity and sheer bravery are set out against the backdrop of the scenic landscape and enlivening socio-political ambience of the concerned periods. The characters exhibit certain important values—sacrifice of self-interest, living according to one's own convictions, dignity in the face of humiliation, abhorrence of dishonesty, preservation of their honour by women even at the cost of their lives, nobility and strength of character, and brotherhood among communities. Reading these stories, one can see that these brave people even dignified death by meeting it calmly.

The third volume, *A Ruby Shattered*, is a balladry of Saurashtrian love legends. Five of these are based on the folk tradition of storytelling. The sixth is written by the author in *duha* verse, the most popular form of folk lyric in the Saurashtra and Kachh region, which he discovered during his research. The *duhas* exude a rich literary fragrance, and their poetry touches the heart. A feature compiled, translated and epitomized from the author's speeches and writings about the lore of the Charans, a balladeer community, is appended for the benefit of students and scholars of folk literature, especially ballads. Almost all the stories narrated here are legends of men and women of nomadic tribes. In every tale, the woman emerges stronger than the man. He stumbles and staggers just when he needs to stand upright, but she displays her mettle at the decisive moment; he lets himself be bogged down by social dogmas, traditions, customs, and conventions, but she revolts, single-handedly, against being shackled by them.

A glossary has been appended to each volume. It contains most of the non-English words and clarifies colloquialisms. All the stories are illustrated with lively sketches which are truly representative of the folk art and environment of contemporary Saurashtra. They intermingle with the text lending a decorative look. Each collection also carries a map of Saurashtra showing the sites of the stories.

The translation of these collections into English is a monumental effort and Vinod Meghani has been successful in retaining the sheen of the original. The printing and get-up are excellent. Kudos to Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for publishing these volumes.

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Youth! Arise, Awake, and Know Your Strength. *Swami Srikantananda*. Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence, Ramakrishna Math, Domalguda, Hyderabad 500 029. E-mail: hyd2_rkmath@sancharnet.in. 145 pp. Rs 10.

This booklet is tailored for the young and those who are not well acquainted with Swami Vivekananda's life and message. There is a growing need for the Indian youth to understand their own culture and religion, and realize their greatness and strength, for in its absence they are being swept off their feet by the swelling tide of massive lifestyle changes that are deluging India. The youth can stem and contain such unhealthy changes in their lives and thoughts by imbibing the strengthening message of Swami Vivekananda. Young boys and girls can find in Swamiji no condemnation, no harping on their weaknesses—like they come across in many others—but only encouragement and genuine sympathy. Condemnation can never be instrumental in unfolding a person's inner resources. Swami Vivekananda himself went through intense struggles in his youth in the process of growing to his final stature. That is what gives his message the steel and thunder it has.

The author has brought together relevant portions of Swami Vivekananda's teachings under chapters aimed at helping today's youth face their pressing problems. The booklet is divided into five sections. Part One exhorts young people to acquire a man-making education, saying they must be characterized by strength and will power. Part Two is on self-confidence and how to build it. This is a subject that is growing in importance. Part Three advises young people on how to overcome suicidal tendencies. Part Four deals with *brahmacharya*, sexual continence, and the strength derived by its practice. This forms the longest section, and naturally, for this problem is acute among the youth. Part Five

briefly speaks of what Vedanta is.

A handy and useful guidebook for the youth.

Swami Satyamayananda

A Journey in Consciousness. *Dr Shivaram Karikal.* Arathi Publications, Hat Hill, Mangalore 575 006. 2004. xiii + 145 pp. Rs 120.

This book is divided into thirty-one chapters dealing with various aspects of consciousness, like the nature of consciousness, superconsciousness, and so on. Some of these chapters are apparently unrelated to the central theme of the work. This becomes evident when one goes through the fragmentary outline of the contents given in the list of chapters. At the beginning of each chapter the author quotes from the teachings of enlightened spiritual seekers and saints like Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, Swami Ramdas, Mata Amritanandmayi Devi, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, Jalaluddin Rumi, and scientists like Fritjof Capra. Throughout the work, the author has done his best to stress the central teachings of Advaita Vedanta like the non-difference between the Absolute Reality and individual consciousness, the transcendental unity of our consciousness which is non-dual and which enables us to experience our own self-identity, etc.

However, the book, which the author claims 'is addressed to the handful of people whose very life is centred around enquiring into reality' (vii) falls far short of the expectations that its high-sounding title is likely to evoke. For writing an independent work in English on the higher levels of Advaitic experience, doing full justice to the teachings of works like the *Yoga Sutras*, *Yoga Vasishtha*, *Adhyatma Ramayana*, *Ashtavakra Samhita* and *Mandukya Karika*, is a very complicated job and requires a thorough mastery of the original works in Sanskrit, an exhaustive knowledge of the philosophical vocabulary used in Western and Eastern mystical literature as well as a perfect command of the English language.

There are not many references to the original Sanskrit works, and even the one given at the beginning of Chapter 17 is oddly split. An inherent vagueness and ambiguity of expression, the long, highly involved sentences mixed with complex vocabulary, and an obsession with anglicized technical terms of Sanskrit origin mar the presentation of ideas. In many cases, the author leaves to the reader the burden of making sense of his words. Even in compara-

tively shorter phrases like 'the inevitable finality' (59) and 'In the ontological evolution of consciousness' (24) there is scope for improvement of language and style. The intimacy of direct experience and mastery of the subject, which should reveal themselves in effortless clarity, directness, naturalness and simplicity of style are absent throughout the work.

Swami Tattwamayana

Editor, *Prabuddha Keralam*
Ramakrishna Math, Thrissur

Books Received

Understanding Hinduism. *Dayanand Bharati.* Munshiram Manoharlal, PB 5715, 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110 015. E-mail: mrml@mantraonline.com. 2005. xii+337 pp. Rs 450.

One of those few books that are avowedly 'of the layman, for the layman, and by the layman' yet extensively engage scholarly texts—both Eastern and Western—to explore many critical Hindu concepts and practices and develop a broad understanding of what Hinduism stands for. The balanced, non-reductionist, and unapologetic stance of the author should make this a very valuable 'bridging text', narrowing the divide between scholars and practitioners of the Hindu religion.

The Wisdom of Thirukkural. *Comm. O R Krishnaswami.* Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 2004. xxxvi + 489 pp. Rs 520.

An important study of this ancient Tamil classic dealing with *aram* (virtue), *porul* (wealth), *inbam* (love) and *veedu* (liberation). Transliteration and English rendering of all the *kurals* (couplets), a commentary, parallel citations from other scriptures, and a topic-wise arrangement enhance the value of the text.

Quest for Immortality. *Swami Ramanujana*. Ramakrishna Math, PO Puranattukara, Thirussur 680 551. E-mail: srkmts@sancharnet.in. 2004. 61 pp. Rs 15.

The *Katha Upanishad* for beginners in a dialogic format.

Reports

New Temple Dedicated

The newly built Ramakrishna Prarthana Mandir at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur, was dedicated by Srimat Swami



Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 10 November 2005, the sacred Jagaddhatri Puja day. On this occasion, various programmes were arranged from 9 to 12 November, consisting of lectures by eminent scholars and monks and cultural events by reputed artists.

On the 9th, Swami Vaidyanathanandaji, assisted by the local priests, conducted the vastu puja. The inaugural session began with Vedic chanting by the tribal children of Vivekananda Vidyapith, followed by a welcome address by Swami Nikhilatmanandaji, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur. Then Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and the chairman of the session, lighted a lamp before nicely decorated photos of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. Sri Subimal Chatterjee, ex-coordinator the centre, gave a lucid account of the background of the Abujhmarh Tribal Development Project. Swami Shashankanandaji of

Ranchi and Swami Prabhanandaji of Kolkata then spoke on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, after which Swami Smarananandaji delivered his presidential address. In the evening, there was a cultural programme by the students of the Vidyapith followed by bhajans by Sri Prabhanjay Chaturvedi, a famous singer from Bhilai.

On the 10th, at 8.15 a.m., Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj dedicated the Ramakrishna Prarthana Mandir amidst Vedic chanting in the presence of some 250 monastics and 1,000 devotees. At 9 a special puja was performed by Swami Vaidyanathanandaji. Srimat Swami Gitanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and Swami Smarananandaji were also present during the ceremony. At 11 Dr Raman Singh, Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, paid his homage at the new temple and unveiled a statue of Swami Vivekananda in the Ashrama campus.



In the afternoon Swami Shashankanandaji rendered a musical recital on 'Sri Ram se Sri Ramakrishna' based on the *Ramcharitmanas*. At 2 pm there was Jas Nritya (folk dance) on 'Sri Durga Vandana' followed by a drama, 'Daridra Narayan', based on an incident in

Swami Vivekananda's life, both of which were performed by the boys of the Vidyapith. Swami Smarananandaji presided over the public meeting held at 3.30. Dr Om Prakash Verma, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Ravi Shankar University, Raipur, and Swami Satyarupanandaji of Raipur spoke on 'Bhagavan Sri Ramkrishna: His Life and Teachings'. Then Swami Atmasthanandaji released the commemorative souvenir *Samarpan* and gave his benedictory address. He also distributed mementoes to the artisans and other persons closely associated with the construction of the temple.

In the evening at 7, Sri Partha Bhattacharya of Bilaspur and Smt. Sudeshna Gupta, an AIR and TV artist from Hyderabad, captivated the audience with their beautiful bhajans. Dr Asit Banerjee, a noted sitarist from Bhopal also gave a sitar recital.

The 11th was dedicated to Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. At 11 a.m. Swami Tyagatanandaji of Allahabad gave a musical recital on 'Sita se Sarada Devi' based on the *Ramcharit-manas*.

At 2 in the afternoon the girl students of Vivekananda Vidyapith performed Jas Nritya in praise of Mother Durga followed by dance, drama and speeches by the girls of Ma Sarada Vidya Mandir, Orchha. At 3.30 Swami Gautamanandaji of Chennai presided over the day's public meeting. Dr Suchitra Mitra, Reader in Sanskrit, Allahabad University, Swami Raghavendranandaji of Indore and Swami Chinmayanandaji of Almora spoke on the life and teachings of Holy Mother. Swami Gitanandaji then delivered his benedictory address, which was followed by Swami Gautamanandaji's presidential speech.

At 7 in the evening, the girl students of Vivekananda Vidyapith enacted a drama, 'Sab ki Ma Sarada'. Later Padma Bhushan Smt. Tijan Bai rendered a Pandwani recital (a musical narration of the Mahabharata in local language).



On the 12th morning at 8.30 a colourful procession started from the Ashrama with nicely decorated photos of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda mounted on three equally well-decorated vehicles. Hundreds of monks carrying *gerua* flags in hand and thousands of devotees singing bhajan and kirtan passed through the main roads of Narainpur and returned to the Ashrama at 10.30.

At 2 p.m. the girl students of the Vidyapith performed Suva Nritya (folk dance). It was



followed by 'Shastrarth', a drama depicting the dialogue between the young Rishi Ashtavakra and King Janaka, by the boys of the Vidyapith. The drama was highly appreciated by the audience. The public meeting started at 3.30 with Swami Srikanandaji, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, in the chair. Swami Nikhileswaranandaji of Vadodara, Swami Brahmasthanandaji of Nag-

pur and Dr Kedarnath Labh, Editor, *Vivek Shikha*, from Chhapra, spoke on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Swami Sri-karanandaji then delivered his presidential address.

In the evening at 7, Sri Deepak Banjare and party from Bhilai gave a Panthi Nritya performance and a tribal troupe from Devagaon village performed Gandhi Nritya, Mandari Nritya and Gaur Mar Nritya, all of them differ-

krishna Mission already has a hospital, mobile dispensaries, residential schools, a library, an agricultural farm with training camps, and a vocational training centre—all equipped with up-to-date facilities. The Mission is also active in the areas of tribal service, women's welfare, community health service and the like. Great care is taken to preserve tribal lore. Tribal arts and products are encouraged. At the same time, cultural plurality is never lost sight of, though no foreign culture is grafted on the local people. Schoolchildren undergo multi-disciplinary training; each child is groomed equally in academics, athletics and extra-curricular activities. The Ramakrishna Mission's Abujhmarh Tribal Service has truly empowered people and transformed Narainpur in a very unique way. It is now a model for others to emulate—and at the centre of this transforming radiance is Sri Ramakrishna, now installed 'for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many'.

News from Branch Centres

The library of the higher secondary school run by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherapunji, was inaugurated on 1 September 2005.

Ramakrishna Math, Coimbatore, became a full-fledged branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math from 7 September (see November 2005 issue). For the past 75 years this centre has been

ent varieties of tribal dance. The 4-day celebration finally ended with a vote of thanks by Swami Nikhilatmanandaji.

What began modestly, though with a mighty resolve, two decades ago in Narainpur has now taken a definite form, as it were, with the dedication of the Prarthana Mandir. The energy focused here will diffuse in ever-widening circles to bring greater solace to and uplift of the indigent and simple tribals in one of the most heavily wooded yet impoverished areas of the country. Vested interests were exploiting the forests and the people in the remote Abujhmarh area of Chattisgarh's Bastar district when the Ramakrishna Mission first started its work in the place. The Mission had to surmount innumerable obstacles. However, the triumph of its monks, fortified by their faith in Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi, and inspired by Swami Vivekananda's call to work for the people, was inexorable. In view of the magnitude of the work that has been done till now, the outcome is not difficult to predict. The Rama-

rendering medical, educational and spiritual



service to the people of the locality. Besides daily puja, the centre has been conducting regular religious discourses and weekly spiritual retreats, daily free coaching classes for about 200 poor middle- and high-school students, and a Sunday Balaka Sangha where children of the neighbourhood are given value-oriented education and taught bhajans. The centre plans to gradually expand its work in these and newer areas.

On 6 November, Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, unveiled a new bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda at the Gol Park traffic island, installed at the initiative of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata. On the same day he also inaugurated the Institute's newly built annexe and spoke at the public meeting held in this connection. Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj and Sri Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, Mayor of Kolkata, also addressed the meeting.

Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, started two free tailoring and embroidery training centres for women at Adipur and Dhaneti in Kutch district on 8 November.

Achievement

A student of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Deoghar, stood second at the All-India Green Olympiad organized by The Energy and Research Institute (TERI), New Delhi. He was awarded a scholarship of Rs 10,000.

Sri D N Sahay, Governor of Tripura, in a function held on 5 November at Ramakrishna Mission, Agartala, handed over the G C Saha Memorial Awards for the Best School Students of Tripura. Of the three recipients of the award, two were from the students' home and school run by the centre. The award consisted of a gold medal and a sum of Rs 12,000.

Relief and Rehabilitation

Ramakrishna Math, Cooch Behar, sunk 10 tube wells in Rajarhat-Takagachh and Madhupur areas in October 2005.

Ramakrishna Mission, Jammu, continued its earthquake-relief work by distributing 1,000 blankets, 2,000 shawls and 10,000 rusk packets among 317 families of 27 villages in Poonch district in November.

The following centres continued flood-relief operations in West Bengal:

Ramakrishna Math, Chandipur, distributed 905 kg cooked food, 30 kg *chira*, 80 kg sugar, 13 kg milk powder, 10,000 halazone tablets, 82 candles and 2,084 matchboxes to 2,000 families in 60 villages of Purba Medinipur district. Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Contai, and Ramakrushna Math, Ichapur, distributed khichri, *chira*, gur and halazone tablets among 7,182 families in Purba and Pashchim Medinipur districts respectively. Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, distributed 11,771 plates of cooked food, 1,00,000 packets of oral rehydration salts, 4,00,000 halazone tablets and 20 quintals of bleaching powder in the above two districts.

Ramakrishna Mission Seva Samiti, Karimganj, distributed 5 dhotis, 10 saris, 10 blankets, 10 mosquito nets, 10 pillows, 5 bed sheets, 5 mattresses and 5 utensil sets to 5 families who lost their homes in a fire accident in November.

In November, 46 new houses built by Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, at Kalingarajapuram and Koottumangalam in Kanyakumari district for tsunami victims were handed over to the beneficiaries.

'Ramakrishna Jaldhara'

Surendranagar is one of the most drought-prone districts of Gujarat. It is a common sight to see women in rural areas trekking several kilometres to fetch their daily requirement of water. Even in the towns people have to stand in long queues for hours to collect their daily quota of water from public taps or water tankers.

After the earthquake of 2001, Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi, reconstructed 24 primary schools in the district. While the construction work was in progress the villagers re-



quested the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission to do something to solve their perennial water problem. The monks said they needed the villagers' cooperation.

Soon the monks and volunteers of the above centre went from door to door in the villages, explaining the benefits of their 'Ramakrishna Jaldhara Project'. When the villagers were convinced that the project would bring a permanent solution to their woes, their initial hesitation gave way and they agreed to help the monks.

Work began in 2002 in two villages, Umedpur and Ankewalia. The Mission hired earth-moving equipment and started desilting and deepening ponds, tanks and lakes. Soil thus excavated was carried away to the fields by the villagers in their own tractors; this would enhance the fertility of their fields. Now the villagers were more forthcoming with their help. Those who did not have tractors participated in the plantation of trees—some 2,000 saplings have been planted—on the banks of the reservoirs to prevent soil erosion, in erecting protective fences round them, or in digging channels that would help increase the flow of rainwater into the reservoirs.

With the arrival of the first rains the ponds and lakes began to get filled up and soon they were overflowing! The ground-water level in the surrounding

areas started rising and wells that had gone dry for years became charged again.

Inspired by the project's success, the centre extended its work to 9 more villages in 2003. But requests were still pouring in, and in 2004 the number of villages rose to 18. In 2005, 10 more villages of Limbdi and Chuda taluks were brought under the project, thus taking the total number of villages to 30.

The average cost of deepening the ponds and lakes is Rs 1 lakh. The centre has depended solely on donations from the benevolent public and charitable trusts for funding the project.

As part of the project, 7 handpumps have been installed and a 620-ft-deep tube well has been drilled at a cost of nearly Rs 5 lakh. Besides this, 2 rainwater-storage tanks of 50,000 l capacity each were constructed in Jambdi and Ramrajpar villages of Limbdi taluk which cost Rs 1 lakh. The centre has also donated 5 Syntex tanks of 4,000 l capacity to the remote villages of Surendranagar district for storing water supplied by government tankers.

Thus Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi, has successfully launched a unique Jaldhara movement in Surendranagar district which has caught the imagination of several village panchayats and NGOs to whom the project is now a model.

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